

6th
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE

\$2.50 U.S. \$3.50 CAN. £1.95 DGS. U.K.

April 1987

K48386

THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

**RAMSEY
CAMPBELL
CHARLES L.
GRANT**

**TWO VIEWS
OF MADNESS**

**COLOR FEATURE:
VOODOO**

**MAGIC IN
THE STREETS**

**STRANGE
TALES**

**ALGIS BUDRYS
GEORGE ALEC EFFINGER
PAMELA SARGENT
GEORGE ZEBROWSKI**

**STORY CONTEST
WINNERS**

APR 1987
32007HCE11KN00R ZONE
ALBERT RICE 1501
1113 KING CT
CHEYENNE
WY 82007

363217

APRIL 1987

CONTENTS



Page 28



Page 51



Page 59

FICTION

SIXTH ANNUAL SHORT STORY CONTEST

Winners and runners-up in our annual writing competition.

TWO FACES OF MADNESS

Two dark tales inspired by a J. K. Potter illustration.

The Other Side

Ramsey Campbell

The face across the river saw into the depths of his soul.

An Image in Twisted Silver

Charles L. Grant

His heart's darkest secrets lay trapped within the mirror.

The Man Who Devoured Literature

George Alec Effinger

Without warning, Dempsey's life became an open book.

The Leash

Pamela Sargent

The creature that slept beside her was waking at last.

General Jaruzelski at the Zoo

George Zebrowski

The animals dream of the freedom beyond the bars.

At the Rummage Sale

Vicki Grove

Nobody was fit to lead the PTA—nobody alive that is.

That Fearful Symmetry

Algis Budrys

What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason.

Clay Devils

Pat Murphy

The figurines summoned evil from beyond the village.

The Flat-Brimmed Hat

Nancy Etchemendy

A hand reached out to her across the gulf of time.

FEATURES

Profile: Ramsey Campbell

Stanley Wiater

A conversation with the "horror writer's horror writer."

Profile: Charles L. Grant

Douglas E. Winter

The master of understated terror speaks out.

Life with Rod

Bob Rosenbaum

A lively and revealing interview with Carol Serling.

VOODOO: MYTH AND REALITY

Special color section about the mysterious religion.

Angel Heart

James Verniere

Behind the scenes preview of Alan Parker's new film.

Magic in the Streets

Robert Simpson

The bizarre truth behind the dark legends of voodoo.

OTHER DIMENSIONS

In the Twilight Zone

6

Letters

14

Illuminations

15

The Other Side

99

Books

E. F. Bleiler

Hollywood Grapevine

8

Screen

92

Gahan Wilson

94

"Devil Doll" cover art by David Dircks

ILLUSTRATIONS BY J. K. POTTER, DAVID CELSI, PATRICK PIGOTT, SCOTT EAGLE,

RANDY JONES, TREVOR IRVIN, THERESA KING, AND LINDA MIYAMOTO.

Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, (ISSN # 0270-6090) April 1987, Volume 7, Number 1, is published bimonthly (February, April, June, August, October, December) in the United States and simultaneously in Canada by TZ Publications, a division of Montclair Publishing Corporation, 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. Telephone (212) 986-9600. Copyright © 1986 by TZ Publications. Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* is published pursuant to a license from Carol Serling and Viacom Enterprises, a division of Viacom International, Inc. All rights reserved. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Return postage must accompany all unsolicited material. The publisher assumes no responsibility for care and return of unsolicited materials. All rights reserved on material accepted for publication unless otherwise specified. All letters sent to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine* or to its editors are assumed intended for publication. Nothing may be reproduced in whole or in part without written permission from the publisher. Any similarity between persons appearing in fiction and real persons living or dead is coincidental. Single copies \$2.50 in U.S., U.S. military bases, and U.S. possessions, \$3.00 elsewhere (excepting the December issue, which is \$2.95 in the U.S. and \$3.50 elsewhere). Subscriptions: U.S., U.S. military, and U.S. possessions, \$15.50; \$18.50 elsewhere. All orders must be paid in U.S. currency. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Postmaster: Send address changes to Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, P.O. Box 252, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0252. Printed in the U.S.A.

IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Needles and Pins.



Pamela Sargent



George Zebrowski

An extremely weird thing happened just as we were putting our Sixth Anniversary issue to bed. It all started when our able Managing Editor Peter "Stoney" Emshwiller complained of shooting pains in his back and shoulders. (Not surprising after schlepping over two thousand entries in our annual Short Story Contest from the mail room to his office.) Then Alan Rodgers, our sterling Associate Editor, was afflicted with strange stomach pains and a splitting headache. (Also understandable, since he'd just finished reading those entries while simultaneously putting out an issue of our sinister sister publication *Night Cry*.)

Then Carol Serling, who'd joined us in judging the finalists, mentioned that she was experiencing stabbing pains in her hands whenever she moved a contest entry out of the "maybe" and into the "sorry" pile. But that was only the beginning . . .

Contributing Editor Jim Verniere called from Boston to explain that his color preview of *Angel Heart*, the new Alan Parker film set in New York's voodoo subculture, had been eaten by his word processor. And journalist Robert Simpson was afflicted by a series of bizarre mishaps while working on a story for us on the real world of voodoo.

At first we put it down to sunspots, or an outbreak of a new strain of flu. But then our intrepid Art Director Tom Waters (who'd just stabbed himself with an Exacto knife while pasting up this issue's cover) finally pinned it down:

Some of you out there have been sticking pins into voodoo dolls of the

Twilight Zone staff.

Perhaps some of you are Story Contest entrants trying to influence our decision. Or perhaps you are trying to stop us from revealing the truth about voodoo. Well, we want you to know one thing. It's not going to work. I, for one, am perfectly capable of writing this introduction with both arms in a cast and my legs in traction. So *there*.

Alive and Well

But seriously, we are delighted to report that both *The Twilight Zone* and the spirit of imagination are still alive and well, as the huge volume of submissions to the Short Story Contest indicates. Our winners this year are not only talented but colorful as well. First Place winner Ann Kotowicz works as Records Manager for the Summa Corporation (Howard Hughes's legacy) in Las Vegas, Nevada, and moonlights weekends as "Ann Harris" on KNUU Radio, a news and talk station. She is also involved in local theater, and has just begun teaching illiterate adults to read. Heather Svedbeck, who lives in a suburban California neighborhood disturbingly similar to the setting of her Second Place-winning story, has already made a second sale to *2AM* magazine. And Peni Robinson, our Third Place winner, has traveled all over the country (Alaska, Iowa, Maryland) before returning to her native Texas to attend college.

Carol Serling not only acted as a judge for this year's contest, and contributed a keynote for this month's Illuminations column, but graciously agreed to reminisce about what it was

like to live with another struggling writer, her husband Rod, through both the early times and the high-pressure Hollywood years. Her interviewer, Bob Rosenbaum, is one of the most knowledgeable experts on Serling's life and times. A writer, graphic artist, journalist, and radio producer, Rosenbaum has worked closely with the Serling Archive and Ithaca College School of Communications on a documentary on Serling's life, and designed the Rod Serling memorial exhibit displayed at the Broome County Center for the Performing Arts in Serling's home town of Binghamton, New York.

Art Imitates Art

It was an illustration by artist J.K. Potter (featured in our *Twilight Zone* Gallery last issue) which inspired two dark and disturbing tales by a pair of horror's most talented writers — "The Other Side" by Ramsey Campbell and "An Image in Twisted Silver" by Charles L. Grant. You'll find them in a special section titled *Two Faces of Madness*, which also includes interviews with Campbell and Grant by Stanley Wiater and Douglas E. Winter. Stan Wiater has published both fiction and nonfiction in *TZ* as well as *Fangoria*, *Prevue*, and *Fantasy Review*, and has a new short story in J.N. Williamson's forthcoming anthology, *Masques II*. Doug Winter's newest nonfiction work, *Art of Darkness, the Films of Stephen King*, was published last fall by NAL.

Old and New Faces of '87
Like Campbell and Grant, three other



Nancy Etchemendy



George Alec Effinger



Pat Murphy



Vicki Grove

contributors to this issue have previously appeared in TZ. George Alec Effinger, last seen here with "The Thing from the Slush" (April '82) offers a cautionary tale on the dangers of excessive reading. Effinger has a new novel just out from Arbor House, *When Gravity Fails*. George Zebrowski, who contributes a subtle and moving political fable to this issue, was last seen in the June, 1986, TZ with "Stooges." Not only have half a dozen new Zebrowski stories appeared in the past few months, but he is now editing the annual Nebula Awards volumes and new original anthology series, *Synergy*, for Harcourt Brace.

Pamela Sargent, author of "The Leash," has appeared three times before in TZ with "Out of Place" (October '81) "The Broken Hoop" (June '82), and "The Shrine" (December '82) which was adapted for *Tales from the Darkside* last year. Her most recent works are *Venus of Dreams* (Bantam Spectra), the first novel in a new science fiction trilogy; *The Shore of Women* (Crown), and *Afterlives* (Vintage), an anthology she edited with Ian Watson.

"Clay Devils," a tale of magic in rural Mexico, marks Pat Murphy's first appearance in *Twilight Zone*, although she's been regularly published in *Asimov's SF*, and other publications. She lives in San Francisco, where she works at the Exploratorium science museum, and studies kempo karate. Her second novel, *The Falling Woman* (Tor Books), published in hardcover last year, will be reprinted in paperback this fall.

Nancy Etchemendy also makes

her first appearance in TZ with "The Flat-Brimmed Hat" which has as its setting the hills around Reno, Nevada, where she was born and raised. Author of three young adult sf novels for Avon's Camelot line, Etchemendy has also been published in *Shadows*, *Borderland*, and *F&SF*.

Vicki Grove's story "At the Rum-mage Sale," is one of those rare yarns that walks a fine line between humor and horror. She writes: "I've mostly written for religious publications, such as *St. Anthony Messenger*, *Today's Christian Woman*, and *The Lookout*. But I love reading horror, and a bad experience on a nominating committee sent this story my way." As an added treat, we feature in this issue a delightful short-short (the first in far too long) by Algis Budrys. Longtime reviewer for *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and editor of the *Writers of the Future* anthologies (Bridge), A.J. has just competed a new novel *WHO?* which will be published later this year by Warner Books.

One or two more things before we go. First, this issue marks the return of two regular features, *Coming Up* and the TZ Letters page. And second we've enlisted an extremely well-placed West Coast film insider (although we've sworn not to divulge our tipster's identity) to keep us informed of late-breaking news and gossip in a new column we call *Hollywood Grapevine*.

We're glad you've joined us for our sixth birthday, and we hope you enjoy the festivities. If you do, please do us one small favor.

Put the pins down, okay?

-TK

THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

S. EDWARD ORENSTEIN

President and Publisher

BRIAN D. ORENSTEIN

Executive Vice President, Corporate

RUSSELL T. ORENSTEIN

Executive Vice President, Corporate

CAROL SERLING: Associate

Publisher and Consulting Editor

EDITORIAL

TAPPAN KING: Editor-in-Chief

ALAN RODGERS: Associate Editor

PETER R. ESMHWILLER: Managing

Editor

GAHAN WILSON: Contributing Editor

JAMES VERNIERE: Contributing Editor

ART

MICHAEL MONTE: Design Director

TOM WATERS: Art Director

VALERIE PIZZO: Art Production

PRODUCTION

STEPHEN J. FALLON: Production

Director

LORRAINE LAMBERT: Typography

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

CHRIS GROSSMAN: Controller

SAUL STEINHAUS: Accounting

Manager

ASNAR ANGELES: Accounting

Assistant

ROLANDO GOROSPE: Accounting

Assistant

GWENDOLYN WARE: Accounting

Assistant

MARGARET INZANA: Office Manager

BARBARA MARKEY: Office Assistant

TANYA RODRIGUEZ: Office

Assistant

RICK JACKSON: Traffic

ADVERTISING

MARINA PARUOLO: Advertising

Sales Manager

FERN KERSHON: Sales Representative

THERESA MARTORANO: Advertising

Assistant

CIRCULATION/PROMOTION

MICHAEL DILLON: Circulation

Director

BEVERLY SHIMOFF: Subscription

Manager

JUDY LINDEN: Direct Sales Manager

DEAN LAGE: Circulation Coordinator

GREGORY LAWRENCE STEWART:

Art Designer

BOOKS

by E. F. Bleiler

Three strange futures— and horror, explicit and implicit.

Foundation and Earth by Isaac Asimov
(Doubleday, \$16.95)

The Forever Man by Gordon R. Dickson
(Ace Books, \$16.95)

Firechild by Jack Williamson (Bluejay
Books, \$17.95)

The Inhuman Condition by Clive Barker
(Poseidon Press, \$12.95)

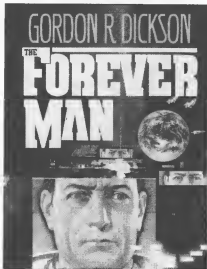
Slow Birds and Other Stories by Ian
Watson (Gollancz, distributed by David
and Charles, \$18.95)

When Isaac Asimov's *Foundation's Edge* came to an end, it was obvious that Golan Trevize of the First Foundation would continue on his quest for ultimates. As *Foundation's Edge* revealed, there was a hidden player or players behind the two Seldon foundations, both of which had been infiltrated, manipulated, and subverted, and the semisacred Seldon Plan has never been more than a fiddle. A complex investigation led Trevize and others to the planet Gaia, which is apparently unique in the universe. All its inhabitants are psychically linked together and to the planet itself, which is thus in a certain sense living. When the investigation reached Gaia, the planet, with its incredible power, cancelled out part of the intrigues and schemes, but allowed Trevize to continue on his quest.

A Weak Foundation

As *Foundation and Earth* relates, Trevize's way is not a simple one, for it concerns not only the beginnings of the human race, but also its end and purpose. The question that besets Trevize is whether the group mind of

Gaia and the concomitant loss of privacy and individuality is the most desirable future for mankind. Trevize, whose special gift is the ability to achieve correct answers from minimal data, is convinced that Gaia is inevitable for the human race, but is nevertheless dissatisfied because he cannot justify this conclusion to himself. Trevize must also wonder why



Gaia's records have obviously been contaminated by the manipulations that have beset the Empire, the reign of the Mule, and the two Foundations.

The answer, Trevize believes, must lie on the semimythical planet Earth, yet the routes to Earth have been erased. But here and there small clues turn up, and Trevize, the historian Pelorat, and Bliss, Pelorat's Gaian lover, keep up the quest. And Bliss is accompanied on his journeys through hyperspace by the somewhat attenuated powers of Gaia.

The path to Earth is long and complex, and along the way our adventurers see strange sights and have

unusual experiences, notably on the planet Solaria, where a new form of humanity turns up that has frightening potentialities. Whether Trevize, Pelorat and Bliss achieve their goal is best not revealed, nor are the implications of what they do find. Let it be enough to say that Asimov has carefully left a couple of space hatches open for sequels.

As is usual with Asimov's work, the narrative is smooth, clear, and free-flowing. It carries the reader along entertainingly. The plotting is ingenious, and the new worlds that are created are strong and convincing. On the debit side, the characterizations, as is often the case with Asimov, are weak, indeed weaker than in the preceding volume. They consist of little more than humors in the Jacobean sense and tricks of phrase, which rather than indicating individuality are simply the equivalent of name tags. Most distressing of all, though, is the grand climax, which to me was an anticlimactic fizzle. As was the case when the *Second Foundation* was at last located in the earlier series, final explanations are a letdown, leaving an increasingly thin vein of credibility. (I could mention mountains and molehills.) All in all, however, *Foundation and Earth* is a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable way to spend several evenings. The reader will find little that is thought-provoking, and if Trevize and his associates cannot wear thin because they were never anything else, Asimov's logic, clarity, and narrative still pull the story through as story.

Semper Fi and Space Spirits

Gordon Dickson's *The Forever Man* is essentially space opera, but space opera with a deliberate balancing out of what are the usual accepted

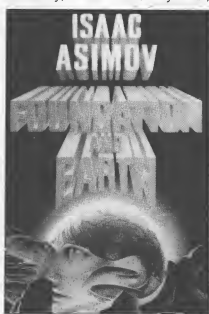
parameters of the subgenre. The properties are counterweighted with new governing mechanisms. Thus, it is interstellar war against a vicious life form that attacks any ships that cross its frontier and refuses to negotiate—but the Laagi are really misunderstood, and empathy for them may stop the war. It is gung ho and semper fi and all that for military service in the space navy, but there is also a higher, non-nationalistic ethic than obedience to the dark, sinister civilians in the background. It is fairly hard science-fiction, yet dissociated minds may be embodied in material objects, and free space spirits (as in E.E. Smith's old epics) may flit about the universe. It is conflict of the sexes, when Jim and Mary are jammed in together in Jim's mind, but it comes to a physical clinch in the end.

Dickson's world is the not-too-distant future when Earthmen are bouncing around space with hyperspace travel and slashing rays. At some distance out, the Earthmen have encountered another space civilization that is at just about the same technological level. Yet despite decades of hostile contact, the earth people do not even have any notion what the Laagi look like or anything about them, for all Laagi ships are fitted out with one-hundred-percent-effective self-destruct mechanisms. This factor, as well as the name "Laagi," which some Earthmen must have arbitrarily assigned to them, may sound a little fishy, but that is the way it is. So far, the war, after an initial grand invasion by the Laagi that failed, has turned into a draw, with both sides jealously guarding their frontiers and getting very up-tight if someone materializes inside it.

But now something new has come up. An ancient Earth space ship, thought lost in a nova explosion during a battle some hundred years ago, has been sighted inside Laagi territory. Theoretically it should not be able to fly, for it has been slashed to ribbons by Laagi rays and it is physically empty of life. But part of the mind of its dead pilot—a French Canadian who babbles about his childhood and sings nursery rhymes—still permeates the ship and operates it on a fantastically efficient level. Captain Jim Wander, one of the more effective wing commanders on the frontier, is detailed to bring in the ancient ship, which is no longer able to make jumps through hyperspace. Accompanying Jim is Mary Gallagher, a civilian geriatrist who is working for the military. Cap-

tain Jim and Mary are successful, and bring the old hulk back to Earth, where it is under intensive study.

The retrieval of the mind-permeated space ship is, of course, an incredible boost for Earth, for if terrestrial scientists can discover how to repeat and control the phenomenon, it will revolutionize space warfare. As the reader will undoubtedly expect after reading the first few chapters of *The Forever Man*, Mary and her colleagues will discover how to force a human psyche out of its body into an inanimate, mechanical corpus, and Jim and Mary, unencumbered by flesh,



will go off gallivanting around the universe. And so it happens.

Their mission is a double one: to learn something about the Laagi, and to contact, if possible, a third civilization, hostile to the Laagi, that exists on the other side of the Laagi imperial sphere. This they accomplish, although the third culture turns out to be something strange and very different from what they had expected. Insights gained along the way promise to end the space war.

The Forever Man begins with a strong picture of military life and discipline in the space service, although a reader may wonder why Jim Wander and Mary Gallagher submit to it without much protest or rebellion—with resignation rather than resistance. This aspect may be part of their culture, but it is also the pulp heritage of simplistic personalities. A purist, too, may be incredulous of and annoyed by the spur-of-the-moment romance that blossoms on the last page of the novel, as well as by Dickson's

slip into spiritism when personal immortality suddenly grins up out of the control board of a spaceship. In general, while *The Forever Man* has some good moments, I would not consider it one of Dickson's stronger works.

Designer Genes

Jack Williamson's *Firechild* is an intricately plotted novel that mingles a whole complex of themes and motifs into a logical framework. There are East-West plots and conspiracies, with impersonations and poncho-and-puñal work; a great discovery that is so important that the whole human race is affected; neo-Fascist plots to seize the United States, masquerading as protection against foreign foes; morally black-and-white politics; a puzzling new form of life; empathy for Spanish-American; and new hope and a new dawn for humanity.

The ultimate factor behind everything is a biological research laboratory where work is ostensibly being carried on in genetic engineering for commercial purposes, but, unknown to most of the personnel, is really a CIA-inspired and financed crash project to develop the ultimate biological weapon, and, incidentally, a defense against it.

Williamson keeps things mysterious for quite a while, but I do not think that there is any harm in giving a framework; there are so many things going on in the story that a reader is not likely to find his interest smothered by this review. The second major point of the story is that Vic Belcraft, the most gifted of the research group, has unquenchable qualms of conscience against the creation of the biological weapon and forebodings of what the military madmen will do with it. He then effectively sabotages the operation. (In summary, this sounds clichéd, but Williamson maintains novelty by many secondary threads.) This sabotage, which takes two forms, gives rise to the story.

As the novel opens, the town of Enfield, in which are located the EnGene laboratories, suddenly vanishes. All organic substance turns into a grayish, powdery ash in a matter of minutes. There are no survivors, and no one knows exactly what happened, although there is an obvious connection to the work at the laboratory. It is up to Vic Belcraft's brother, Dr. Saxon Belcraft, to start things rolling when he tries to determine the fate of Vic.

One of the factors that Belcraft, the Russian spies, the thugs and

sadists, and the military authorities must take into account is the dead Vic's gift to humanity—a new life form; intelligent, humanoid, with incredible paranormal abilities and—unsuspected by either Vic or Saxon—linkages beyond Earth.

Williamson moves rapidly through the story that follows, with a good series of intermeshed plot lines and a couple of interesting characters, notably a small-time Mexican criminal, who is handled very well and a Croatian KGB gunman and trouble-shooter. (On the other hand, Belcraft, the nominal hero, is disappointingly flat.)

Firechild is an entertaining book with some surprises and much of the old Williamson originality, but it is somewhat difficult at times, since Williamson leaps back and forth among five different plot lines. Just about the time a reader has begun to empathize with a Russian spy, or a mad-dog killer, the story jumps away to someone else.

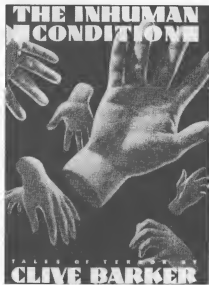
A second problem lies in the ending. Since the days of the Humanoids, when Williamson started writing science-fiction with social idea content, his own ambivalence, frankly recorded in his autobiography *Wonder's Child*, has shown through his story resolutions, and a reader is sometimes puzzled at shifting points of view or questionable linkages of ideas. In the case of *Firechild*, the resolution is just too good to be true, and the reader is likely to find his/her suspension of disbelief sagging in the last few pages. But the book is still good entertainment, written in a lively way.

Hands Across the Sea

Clive Barker is becoming recognized as one of the up-and-coming writers in the King-Straub school of physical, material horror. Although he has not published very much, his reputation has spread through the grapevine and official publicity, perhaps because of grandiloquent recommendations by the big voices of the field. "I have seen the future of horror, and its name is Clive Barker." "The most important new writer of horror since Peter Straub." "Never in my life have I been so completely shaken by a collection of stories." Of course, one never knows how seriously to take such puffs, which sometimes reveal generosity of spirit and bonhomie more than critical judgment.

When I read "The Inhuman Condition," the first story in the book of

the same title, I was disappointed. In subject matter it was a mixture of tough street stuff in the slums of a large British city, with the sadistic horrors of the shudder pulps of the late 1930's and 40's, though done more frankly and openly than would have been possible then. The writing was rough; the story architecture was odd, giving the impression that the story was moving along without any plan other than characters running back and forth; the gimmick didn't fit the tenor of the story particularly, and was not convincing; and there was a slightly pretentious glowing-sunset allegorical note for a conclusion. For



me the story carried little conviction, although I did see imagination in it.

On reading farther into *The Inhuman Condition*, though, I modified my first impressions, for two of the other stories in the collection are good, and one is excellent. The common factor to most of them is lateral expansion, or taking a more or less familiar motif or theme and expanding it by related side issues, some a little different, others simply multiplication of the same idea. For example, in "The Body Politic," Barker reopens the threadbare old theme of living, detached, malevolent human hands. In the old days, as in Guy de Maupassant's "La Main" (translated as "The Englishman" or "The Hand"), individual hands strangled the enemies of their former owner. But Barker invokes a profusion of hands, who are working not so much for revenge as for a parabolic dissolution of the body, in a side reference to the old fable of the human body as a social contract between otherwise independent parts. The hands want their liberty.

And eventually other members follow suit. This last element, though, brings in extraneous matter that destroys the mood of the major part of the story. During the exposition, horror, chases, perils, and pain are multiplied thickly.

In "The Age of Desire," a long short story or short nouvelle, Barker describes the horrors that emerge when a really effective aphrodisiac is developed. In a way, "The Age of Desire," is a development of the sadistic doctor story of the 1930s, but with the descriptive sexuality of our own day. "Down Satan," a short story, semi-parabolic in manner, is a half-absurdist narrative about an eccentric who built a very thorough hell on earth in the hope and expectation that the Devil would come and occupy it. In its restrained development it contradicts the exuberance and horror-overkill of the other stories and offers a change of pace, but somehow lacks the pointedness that it should have.

Much the best story in the book, and one that yields some credence to the publicity puffs I have cited above, is "Revelations," an intricate story of crime, lust, love, ghosts, religious fanaticism, and repeated patterns in fate. There have been almost innumerable stories about the dead who return to work out some sort of redemption or adjustment, but "Revelations" is one of the best I have ever read. The characters click, the physical horror does not get out of control, and the American setting, a low-grade, run-down motel not far from Amarillo, Texas, is entirely convincing. In its complexity, neat dovetailing of varied plots and tricks of fate, "Revelations" reminded me of one of Joyce Carol Oates's better short stories.

Whether a book is worth purchasing for the sake of one story is a matter for an individual reader. But "Revelations" does indicate that Barker, even if his fans are extravagant and premature, is still an author to be watched. Despite my criticisms above, he has the same faculty as does Stephen King for dragging the reader into his stories. This is an important asset, one that can outweigh many flaws.

A very different concept of horror is to be found in Ian Watson's *Slow Birds*, which contains eleven stories of mixed sort: horror, science-fiction, fantasy, and absurdist. All have previously appeared in magazines and British anthologies within the past five years. It is a good collection with sev-

eral outstanding stories.

"White Socks" is a really palpitating story of the inexorable penalties for doing the slightest thing wrong, for doing nothing at all, or just for being the wrong sort of person. Set in an African game preserve where there are still leopards, giraffes, and other large animals, it involves native magic, theriomorphy, reincarnation, and fate—as well as human failings. Unlike Clive Barker's very concrete, explicit stories, it conveys horror by implication, and it is horror that is permanent and implacable, not momentary and finished when the story situation comes to a close. Tightly constructed, with good characterizations and fine dialogue, it is an excellent piece of work.

Also outstanding is the short science fiction story "Slow Birds," which is set in an England in a parallel universe. The cultural level of the land is premodern, with no hint of electricity, radio, or more modern developments. Life, for the story at least, is circumscribed to a complex of a few villages loosely associated through a common culture, including

skate-boat races.

This old English way of life is badly disrupted by the so-called slow birds, or metal contraptions, tubular and somewhat reminiscent of birds, that inexplicably appear and disappear around the countryside. They move along slowly with no obvious means of propulsion at about three feet an hour, and stay around for anywhere up to twenty-four hours, at which time they disappear, perhaps to reappear elsewhere. Unless they explode—in which case everything around them is annihilated, forming a smooth, circular lake of glass about five miles across. At the moment the slow birds are an occasionally deadly nuisance, but in perhaps a couple of hundred years they will have destroyed the land. In the meanwhile the inhabitants of the villages of Tuckerton and Atherton manage to live with them and hold periodic games, with iceboats gliding across the smooth surfaces of the glass lakes.

All this is a polite way of describing life in an England caught between two superpowers, for the gimmick of the story is that two advanced tech-

nologies in a parallel world are using Watson's England as a transmission channel for bombs. Due to different time rates, the war will be over in a matter of hours in the high-tech world, but the devastation will continue for centuries around Atherton and Tuckerton. There is a solution to the problem, but it is low-keyed and it comes perhaps too late.

Other unusual stories include "Universe on the Turn," an absurdist tale of sexuality in the far, far future, when the universe stops its patterned progress and begins to return to old ways, and "ghost Lecturer," a tale of what happened when the Roman poet-philosopher Lucretius is brought back to life. Unfortunately, he brings his world processes along with him, with unexpected results. Other imaginative stories make this a very worthwhile collection.

Briefly Noted:

Down Town, a fantasy novel by Viido Polikarpus and *Twilight Zone* Editor-in-Chief Tappan King, will be published in paperback in March by Tor Books. ■

NEBULA AWARDS 21

SWFA's Choices for the Best in Science Fiction and Fantasy 1985

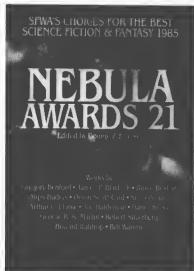
Edited by George Zebrowski

This glittering collection of the best in science fiction in 1985, presents award-winners chosen by the members of the Science Fiction Writers of America. The book features the winning novella, novelette, and short story, a work by the author of the winning novel, as well as the work of selected nominees, and an essay by the eminent critic, Algis Budrys on the year in science fiction.

What critics said about NEBULA AWARDS 20:

"Aah, this is like settling down with a box of the best chocolates: every one a tasty surprise."—*The Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"A gift to make your friends eager to sample more of the varied entrees on the ever-growing science fiction menu."—*Christian Science Monitor*



HBJ

**Harcourt
Brace
Jovanovich**

\$19.95 hardcover
\$ 8.95 paperback

Available at bookstores

LETTERS

RAISING "NACKLES"

TO HARLAN ELLISON:

I have read your article and censored teleplay of "Nackles" in the February, 1987 *Twilight Zone*, and though I enjoyed reading both, I also saw flaws in both.

Good as it was, "Nackles" was downbeat enough that I don't blame the network for thinking twice about putting the show on the air. Though I justify the wisdom of holding "Nackles" for revision, I fail to see any logic in the runaround the network gave you for revising the script. Your article, though, seems to spin this as some kind of vendetta, when it could just as easily be the less personal half-assedness normally present in a bureaucratic chain of command.

Finally, I don't see an anti-bigotry message that redeems "Nackles" from its downbeat mood and racial epithets. Poday goes through the whole play hating minorities, then at the end gets ripped to pieces by a *Black* (and in the revision Latin, Oriental, Eskimo) demon—not disproving but confirming the reason for the hatred Poday has for minorities, a message completely opposite the one you obviously intended. I think the story would make its point better if the demon had Poday's face, emphasizing that his *own* hatred, not the vengeance of others, destroys him.

DAVE BERKEBILE
Boca Raton, Florida

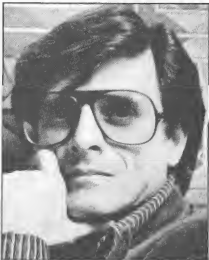
DEAR EDITOR:

Although I personally feel that the dark and pessimistic "Nackles" is better suited to *Twilight Zone Magazine* than to the television show, I deplore the methods by which CBS kept the episode off the air. However, I do wish Harlan Ellison took a different attitude toward television and its constraints.

Several issues ago, TZ ran an article about the censorship problems faced by Rod Serling on his original series. Despite some ridiculous network censorship, Serling was still able to produce quality television and never stopped working to bring new

ideas to his show despite network interference.

No one can blame Mr. Ellison for quitting (even without the "Nackles Affair" it would have happened sooner or later), but television needs a few



Harlan Ellisons on the inside pushing the frontiers of network narrowmindedness. So, Mr. Ellison, if you're reading this, stare at the words below; say them softly aloud three times:

TELEVISION IS WORTHWHILE.

TELEVISION NEEDS ME.

I WILL WORK IN TELEVISION
AGAIN.

MAT RAPACZ
St. Johnsville, New York

PENNIES AND PINS

DEAR EDITOR:

Re: Pinhead Phrenetics and other Hysterical Phenomena.

I read Mr. Schweitzer's haunting tale of penniomancy (Feb. '87). First, I thought, this guy's really freaking out. Then it occurred to me: maybe there's something to it. Well, I didn't have to worry—heck, I pick up pennies all the time. Money is money and the root of all evil. Ever watch what happens when someone's change purse spills? People within a twenty foot radius behave like rabid dogs! Anyway, back to Mr. Schweitzer, I presume.

While reading Mother Goose to the kids, I happened upon "Pins." It goes like this:

*See a pin and pick it up,
All the day you'll have good luck.
See a pin and let it lay,
Bad luck you'll have all the day.*

So, Mr. Schweitzer, never mind the pennies. Look for some pins. Another Mother Goose rhyme:

*For every evil under the sun
there is a remedy or there be none.
If there be one, seek till you find it;
If there be none, never mind it.*

Don't sweat the small stuff.

DOTTIE L. WETHINGTON
Stuart, Florida

EAST IS WEST

DEAR EDITOR:

I enjoyed your essay, "A Little Night Magic" in the February TZ. (I didn't realize we were neighbors.) Only, it seems to me the sun rises in the eastern sky over the apartment towers in Brooklyn, and sets somewhere over an oil refinery tank in New Jersey. Is this what is called "poetic license"?

MIKE OSTROWSKI
Staten Island, New York

While the Twilight Zone is a place where the impossible can become possible, that doesn't extend to rearranging the cosmos. The sun, indeed, sets in the west in Staten Island, as elsewhere. We go on.

We welcome letters on any subject of interest to our readers. All letters must contain your name and address and are assumed to be intended for publication, unless you request otherwise. Letters submitted become the property of the Publisher, and we reserve the right to edit them for length or suitability. Send letters to TZ LETTERS DEPARTMENT, 800 Second Avenue, New York, NY 10017.

ILLUMINATIONS

A NOTE
FROM THE
PUBLISHER

FREEDOM TO IMAGINE



I've got some good news and some bad news, as the old joke goes. Only this time, the joke isn't very funny.

First the bad news. There's an insidious movement creeping across our country that threatens all of us, even the readers of this magazine. It's been called a "dumbing down" of culture, a trend that seeks to remove anything that smacks the least bit of challenge or controversy from books, textbooks, magazines, films—all forms of mass media. It started, as it always does, with the easy targets—the material that no one wants to defend. But now it's starting to affect our freedom to think, to question—to dream.

On our television screens, in the theater, in books and magazines we can witness greed, duplicity and especially graphic violence unrestrained and unmuzzled any day on the week. Death is offered up in living color or lurid print—death by machine gun, karate punch, pistol whipping, or death bare-handed—but few people seem to worry about the effects of such raw cruelty on the psyches of the young. And yet, there are those today who consider classic works like *Cinderella*, *Macbeth* and *The Wizard of Oz* (and undoubtedly this magazine as well) to be evil, dangerous and not fit reading for these same young people.

It's mostly the doing of a small group of people who've appointed themselves guardians of what we see and hear and think. It's not that some of what they're attacking isn't offensive—it is. It's just that they're trying to make our decisions for us, to take the choices out of our hands. And that's something we can't allow. The question that must always be asked is: "Who is to be the censor?" Who is so omnisciently wise, so morally and ethically right as to be able to judge what you and I should see or read?

Too often, as history has proved time and again, what begins as an outraged foray against one book or magazine or movie—or group—becomes a weapon against the freedom of all of us. It begins as a moral issue, but

soon becomes a political one with the potential for serious and damaging incursions into our basic liberties.

Now the good news. Despite all attempts to suppress it, imaginative fiction is not only alive and well, but growing in popularity. Some of you first entered the *Twilight Zone* twenty-eight years ago when the original series premiered. Many of you joined us here for the first time six years ago by reading our first issue. It still surprises and delights me that an idea that is nearly three decades old still has such a powerful hold over people. Even today all you have to do is hum a bar or two of the familiar theme and you've instantly conveyed the idea that the laws of the universe have somehow ... slipped a bit.

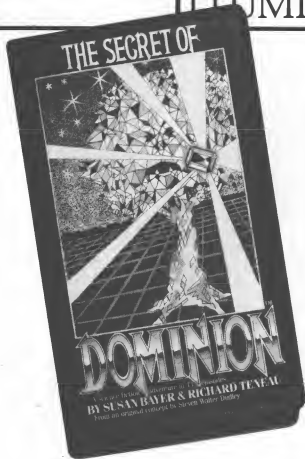
It's astonishing how far we've come. Not many years ago, stories about the strange or the miraculous were read by only a small minority of people. Now works of fantasy, science fiction, and the supernatural regularly appear on bestseller lists and have inspired many of our most popular films and television programs.

Nowhere else in literature is one so free to advance ideas and suggest solutions. Nowhere is the imagination given greater range to envision worlds vastly different from our own. It's gratifying to me that this celebration of the imagination continues to be exercised in these pages—as this year's winners of our annual short story contest demonstrate. Some of the writers who entered this year's competition weren't even born when *The Twilight Zone* first came into existence, and yet the tradition has lived on.

I offer my congratulations to this year's winners, and to the rest of you, and all our readers. You've continued to dream and to believe. I hope that this, our sixth anniversary issue of *The Twilight Zone*, pleases you all. Enjoy!

Carol Serling

ILLUMINATIONS



RADIO SCI-FI

A strange package arrived on our desks here at *Twilight Zone* the other day. Now we're not unaccustomed to weird objects (to say nothing of persons) passing through our offices, but this one was, well, eye-catching: a strange triangular box containing a toy robot and an audio cassette. Since the robot managed to walk away while we were at lunch, we decided we'd better listen to the tape that afternoon before it, too, disappeared.

Well, it wasn't Madonna.

In fact, it was a complete radio drama, a wonderful potboiler that reminded us a lot of the old *Green Hornet*. It's part of a series called *The Secret of Dominion*, produced in St. Louis by Susan Bayer and a staff of about a dozen at Cygnus III Productions.

The story—its "original concept" is credited to

Steven Walter Dudley—begins with an army of evil galactic nasties invading the Earth and enslaving mankind. But hope's not lost! Don't sell the car; don't begin divesting yourself of real estate! The story's just begun!

The dialog does get a bit stiff and hokey at times, but the production quality is excellent, the special effects are not only abundant but quite good, and the acting is professional.

Dominion is set to premier on WMRY-FM in St. Louis on January 11. The series will run on Sunday evenings for thirteen weeks.

St. Louis is a test market for the series—if it catches on in other cities there'll doubtless be lots more of *Dominion* and other new projects from Cygnus III Productions as well. We certainly hope it does; good radio theater is a special treat.

—Chris Karwowski

COMIC RELIEF

Sometimes it seems like there are as many good writers in comics as there are unblemished necks in Transylvania. That is, not a lot. Like many sf writers, comic writers too frequently come to their profession through a misplaced desire to recapture the lost innocence and wonder of their youthful obsession. This nostalgia becomes their prison; the imitative regurgitation of clichés, their striped uniform of incarceration.

Alan Moore, a prolific young Britisher, is not content with merely rearranging the prison library. He has, with *The Watchman* (his new twelve-issue monthly series for DC Comics), put the superhero comic through its most revolutionary change since Stan Lee infected Spider-Man with a dose of teenage angst. Fresh from his reanimation of *Swamp Thing* (which he continues to write), Moore has now given us the first truly post-modern superhero comic—a book that is at once satisfying adventure as well as commentary on the impulse behind such adolescent nonsense. It is more a comic about the cult of

comics than it is one for the cult (which is all most of its competitors aspire to).

The action transpires in an alternate world where masked vigilantes, and later a true superhero, actually exist. The first wave of costumed heroes are directly inspired by the 1938 appearance of Superman in the premiere issue of *Action Comics*, and later put out of business first by the arrival of a superhero (Dr. Manhattan, victim of a 1960 nuclear accident) then by the passage of the "Keene Act" in 1977, outlawing freelance crime-fighting. With understated prose and virtuoso story-telling, Moore creates a complex and believable reality of pop-culture-inspired fictitious history, mixing sex, politics, and super-science as no one before him has. Ultimately, though the world of the *Watchmen* has been transformed by the personification of our puerile fantasies, it is identical to our own in one essential respect: it's a mess, still on the brink of self-destruction despite the presence of the ultimate human weapon. The more things change...

—Lou Stathis



ILLUMINATIONS



PHOTO BY LEE DALY

STARMAGIC

The atmosphere changes as you step through the doors of New York City's Upper-West-Side StarMagic shop. One moment you're caught up in the hustling pace of one of the world's most aggressive cities; the next you find yourself in what must be the Golden Buddha's game room.

Among the sunglasses with holograms of eyes for lenses, the toy robots, and the celestial invitation cards, there's a cat sleeping on top of a glass case filled with strange and colorful crystals. With so many gadgets and so much spacey-glittery stuff to capture the eye, hardly anyone notices the cat.

In fact, it's hard to concentrate on any one thing: posters cover the walls, telescopes point off into unimaginable directions, and the strange and useless-looking spinning disks threaten to mesmerize you for hours.

Justin Moreau and Robert Hanfling founded StarMagic in 1978 with the idea of "not selling a

product but promoting an idea." It seems to have been quite an idea indeed; the store at 73rd and Amsterdam in New York is the third one they've opened. (Other locations are in downtown Manhattan and in San Francisco.)

"The store," says Douglas Hardy, manager of the shop in uptown New York, "attracts everybody. StarMagic brings out the child in every adult and the adult in every child."

StarMagic sells its atmosphere as much as it sells its peculiar line of merchandise; a pervasive, almost-mystical calm about the shop. StarMagic, says Hardy, "helps people's consciousness, gives them a sense of who they are."

And perhaps that's so. Maybe the sleeping cat has the right idea: maybe the *real* thing to do at StarMagic is to curl up for a snooze and draw in the energy.

If we thought we could get away with it, we might give it try.

—Chris Karwowski

FROG HEAVEN

As Shirley Jackson might have said it: *Elmwood House stood alone against the hills ... and whatever hopped, hopped alone.*

The red brick rooming house is a one hundred-year-old landmark that overlooks the strangest place in Arkansas—Eureka Springs, an Ozark town built flush into a series of hillsides that are so steep that it's possible to walk into one of the town's older churches through the top of the bell tower.

In comparison, stately Elmwood House doesn't appear especially unusual. But the top floor of the structure—which dates back to 1886—is a very peculiar museum.

"Very unique," the three-color brochure boasts, "one of a kind."

And it certainly is.

Up three steep flights of wooden stairs, past a frog-shaped sprinkler that spits water onto the lawn, up even more stairs inside the house, the frog museum squats amphibiously above the town and the woody Ozark mountains that surround it. Frog Fantasies is a collection of five thousand frogs and a prized photo

of Robert Goulet. It's the—er—lily pad of Pat Mesa, whose mother-in-law began collecting frogs nearly fifty years ago. Some are tiny frogs of gold, made as jewelry. Some are porcelain frogs with wide-open mouths: ashtrays. One is an actual bullfrog's skin, stripped from the flesh, tanned, and sewn into one of the world's few genuine dead-frog coin purses. There's a zipper in its stomach.

But no frog is displayed with as much pride as is Goulet's photo.

Goulet—famed for his booming-voiced performance as the sterling Sir Lancelot in Broadway's *Camelot*—also possesses a world-renowned frog collection which numbers about three thousand.

"They're everywhere," says Goulet. "Some are as small as a fingernail, and I have a couple that are in a sculpture that is three feet tall. I've bought maybe six of them."

The museum, bolstered at having such a celebrity as Goulet to lend legitimacy to frog collecting, is hoping to hold a convention of frog collectors.

—Ron Wolfe



ILLUSTRATION BY PAUL J. MARINGELLI

ILLUMINATIONS

REALLY WEIRD TALES



REALLY WEIRD TALES

We open on a brain spinning on a marble column, lost in the middle of a red fog. As we draw closer to the gray matter, we hear a voice: "There are some stories so weird," the voice says, "we can only ask ourselves: Where do they come from?" We then move inside the brain, where a man in drab suit and tie is swinging a flashlight. "They come from here," he tells us, "in the deepest recesses of the mind, where we store all our whimsical and bizarre thoughts.... Join us now, as we enter that portion of the brain that brings us (close up on man's eye as the show's title jumps out of it) — "Really Weird

Tales!"

The man who serves as our narrator is ex SCTVer Joe Flaherty, and for ninety minutes last October he, several fellow alumni from that Emmy-winning program — John Candy (*Little Shop of Horrors*), Martin Short (*The Three Amigos*), and Catherine O'Hara (*After Hours*) — and Home Box Office carried us through a world reminiscent of another fantasy anthology series — only funnier.

Billed as a "dimension of satire," HBO's *Really Weird Tales* was done as a humorous homage to fantasy anthologies like *The Twilight Zone*. In the three stories we encounter Short as a Vegas-style lounge singer taken in by

a girlie magazine publisher in search of immortality; Candy as a mysterious stranger who drifts into a small town and brings with him a smooth tongue, a little adventure, some fast real estate deals, and a visit from two aliens; and O'Hara as a woman who is cursed with the power to incinerate anyone she loves.

"All's Well That Ends Strange," "Cursed with Charisma," and "I'll Die Loving" were written by O'Hara, Flaherty and his brother David. Joe Flaherty, who was executive producer of the three episodes and the *Serlingesque* host, strutted through the scenes, lit pipe in hand and a edge of sarcasm in his voice, at times more

Rod than Rod. Produced by Atlantis Films Limited in Canada, this was planned by Flaherty as a "one-time-only event," never to be re-telecast after its initial screening (and its run during the rest of October as individual episodes). So why draw your attention to something many months dead? Because, flawed as it was — many of the jokes missed — the show was funny, and doesn't deserve to vanish forever. So maybe if some letters were written, or phone calls made, HBO might consider re-running the episodes, or at least releasing them onto videotape. Or, Flaherty willing, new *Really Weird Tales* might some day be told.

— Robert Simpson

Presenting the Winners of Our Sixth Annual SHORT STORY CONTEST

Chosen by the Editors of

Rod Serling's
THE **TWILIGHT** ZONE Magazine

This year we received over 2000 entries from as far away as Bangkok and New Zealand and as near as Brooklyn and New Jersey. Our winners and runners-up this year displayed wit, warmth, imagination and a keen sense of the contemporary American experience. Our congratulations to you all.

THE WINNERS

First Place: WINTER GATHERING by Ann K. Kotowitz
Second Place: AFTER A BRIEF COMMERCIAL MESSAGE
by Heather Svedbeck
Third Place: NEREID by Peni Robinson

HONORABLE MENTION TO

Nancy Baker
Robert F. Cain
Dan DiDio
Timothy A. Draughon
Hilary Erlbaum
Colleen Farrell
Dale R. Howard

Belinda King
Ron D. Kingsley
R. Kringle
Michael H. Krohn
Kael Martin
E. A. Merla

Warren J. Rosaluk
K.J. Smalley
Valerie Stocking
Craig A. Strickland
Cathy Dawn Walraven
Jack Webb
Lane Zellman

Special thanks to Dick Saggio's creative writing class at Mountain View High School, Mesa AZ, for their imaginative entries.

Like my Mama said, "Times have been worse, but I cain't remember when." Barn half burned down, my man left (and good 'riddance, too), baby's sick and Winter's comin' on fast. Shoot. Them poor old hens are down to layin' only two or three times a week, and small eggs, too. Managed to save some seed and grain from the fire, but not much. Since that old bastard took off, ain't been no fresh milk for the baby, and the Welfare Lady won't be comin' for at least a couple weeks.

So here I am just sittin' on this run-down old porch, listenin' to mice (probably rats) scratchin' around underneath me. At least the sun poked through the clouds on its way down. Makes the woods across the road rosy, almost like Spring. Ha. Be a long time afore any of us see Spring again.

What in tarnation! Must have dozed off. Somethin' was on me. Sheee! Where'd that mangy ol' cat come from? Look at her paradin' around here just like she belonged and rubbin' on me, too. Poor old thing startled me, kind of. My, but if she don't look like somethin' ... no. Not even her mama would drag her in lookin' like that, all matted and dirty. Bet she's pretty all cleaned up: black with a little round white face and boots.

"Say Kitty, is that a pink nose on your face? Come here, Kitty."

Lord, she jumped up on my lap quick as you please, purrin', too. Despite her looks, must have been raised 'round people. I'll see if I can get some of these burrs out.

"Hold still now, Cat. I ain't gonna hurt you if I can help it."

Didn't mean to spend so much time cleanin' and brushin' that darned cat. Before I knowed, it was dark. Little Susie just woke up and wants her supper. Lord, child, don't we all? Old Cat here could use some vittles. She looks so much nicer now.

"Say Cat, do you like babies? Mine's the eighteen-month-old kickin' up the fuss inside. Looks a lot like you, too: soft, white skin, black hair, green eyes, and too skinny for her own good ... so why not come in?"

If that beast don't know what I'm sayin', then I'm hanged! Why, she jumped right in the crib with my Susie. Look at them two, like best friends.

"Just a minute, Cat. Don't want you walkin' on that quilt with four dirty feet. We may be poor, but we weren't raised in a barn."

What's this? The son-of-a-gun is lickin' her toes! If I was superstitious ... but shoot, sometimes people and animals just understand each other. I

get the feelin' Cat and Susie and me are gonna be good friends.

I hope that old cat stays. Don't know if she will, though. Here it is supertime and nothin' but spuds and beans to eat. Been that way too long, too long. I can manage, but Susie-girl ... she's lookin' awful peaked. Scares me.

"Listen, Cat. Got nothin' in the house fit for you or the baby to eat. Lord, it hurts to say so. You're welcome to stay though, even try a boiled potato or two. Just don't you get at my hens! You do, and I'll make a stew out of your bony carcass."

Oh what a look! Just had to laugh.

"Cat, you couldn't be more plain if you sat up and spoke. No m'am, I won't boil you. And I trust you won't dine on chicken tonight, either."

Now what? She wants out? Hope she comes back by morning.

"Night, Cat."

Mornings sure are getting colder. Got to get out and chop more wood today. Little Susie coughed and cried most of the night. How I wish there was somethin' I could do. Damned Welfare Doctors rather see her dead than do anything to help.

Good Lord! Where in Sam Hill did that rabbit come from? Are things coming here to die now? No ... been killed. Still warm.

"Cat, that you in the bushes?"

Sure is, and look how proud she is.

"This bunny your doin'? I have to ask. How you purr! This is the first meat we've had in I don't know how long. Thank you, Cat."

What a surprise. Cat just might be a welcome addition to this family. Ha. Better at bringin' home vittles than my miserable sot man ever was. We really will have a stew tonight. Can even make a little pillow of bunny fur for Susie. Won't she like that? I got work to do today, and glad of it.

"Cat, you know how to swing an axe?"

Been a long time since I dressed a coneys, but the stew was right tasty, if'n I say so myself. We all had some. Cat was ever so delicate about eating hers. I don't regularly believe in spoilin' animals, but I let her eat right on the table. Susie was tickled by that. We both laughed long and hard. I almost forgot what that was like. Laughin'. When I was a girl Mama used to say, "Child, you laugh like a summer stream." And I did, too. Used to sneak down to the river, wade in up to my knees and listen to the water. We laughed together, the river and me: cool, strong, deep. So long ago.

"Gonna call you my Magic Cat.

1ST Place WINTER GATHERING

ANN K. KOTOWICZ



"At college, I fell deeply in love with radio. I'd hoped to be a newspaper reporter, but radio news got its hooks into me, and I've never even tried to get away. I never considered myself able to write fiction. Too many words. But last June, a co-worker coerced me into taking a fiction writing class with him. 'Winter Gathering' was the result."

If I rub your belly, all my wishes will come true. Can you bring us some milk? 'Course not ... but I'm wishin' all the same for a half-gallon—I ain't greedy. Poor Susie here could surely use it. I near forgot what butter and cheese taste like, but that's okay, Susie here is all I have in the whole world. Oh, and you too, Magic Cat. You really belong here now, and we want you to stay. Please Cat. If we can't have fresh milk, at least let us have you. Why, see how pretty I got you lookin'? Promise to brush you every day to make your coat shiny. I don't mind sayin' that you even put on a touch of weight. Must have been awful cold and lonesome out there if our mean vittles can fatten you up. There's a long winter ahead. Can't you see you need a home? This is it, Magic Cat, this is it."

Must be goin' half loony talkin' such a way to a stray animal. But ... shoot ... she is special. Everything feels different. Whole.

But that Welfare Lady'll come tomorrow with the food stamps and a whole gallon of milk, just cause I wished on my Magic Cat tonight.

Cat's at the front door again. Well, if she wants to spend the night outside, fine with me. She's got a fur coat. If she keeps bringin' home rabbits, maybe I'll get a fur coat, too.

"Night, Cat."

Rain. Guess it's better than snow for now. The chill's bad for my Susie. Had to keep her in the bed with me all night. She shook so bad I even wished Cat had been there to help keep her warm. Funny ... now that I think of it, never came across any fleas on her, despite how wretched Cat looked the day she showed up here. Guess she really is a magic cat if she can keep them blood-suckin' vermin out of her coat.

Hope she's in the barn, or what's left of it. Weather's too miserable for any beast to be out. Guess while my baby's finally quiet and sleepin' I better pull on them ugly rubber boots full of holes my man left behind and that poor tattered Hudson Bay jacket of Daddy's, then get out and check on my scrawny hens. Maybe we'll have eggs for breakfast. Been three days

(continued on page 73)

2ND Place

AFTER A BRIEF COMMERCIAL MESSAGE

HEATHER SVEDBECK



"I've been writing for a little over three years, working on three unpublished novels, a screenplay and a teleplay based on 'After a Brief Commercial Message'. I've lived in California, off and on, for most of my life, and am a

single mother with three kids: Angie, 10, Shaun, 8, and Mandy, 3. When I heard that I'd won the contest, I felt like I'd suddenly been dropped into someone else's life, because something like this has certainly never happened to me before."

Linda wanted nothing more than to curl up on the couch and watch TV, but Steve had forgotten to do the marketing after work—again—and there was no milk in the house and the baby would be out of diapers by morning. Steve had stubbornly refused to budge from in front of the TV; he said it was his turn, and so she found herself driving to the store. Her mood didn't improve any when she pulled up in front of the SoSafe. They were closed.

"Damn it," she said, hitting the steering wheel with the palm of her hand. The nearest store was that new one that'd just opened a couple of blocks down, and she decided to give it a try.

A few minutes later she was inside the store, trying to tug one shopping cart free from the rest.

"May I assist you?"

Linda turned, surprised to see a neatly groomed man, wearing a stiffly starched white shirt and crisp orange vest, standing by her side. "I didn't hear you come up," she said.

"Our clerks here at Paymore—where you pay less but get so very much more: Paymore—are always friendly and eager to help."

"In that case, why don't you get one of these loose for me." Linda nodded toward the carts. "Say, are you sure you guys don't weld these things together in your spare time?"

"Oh no, ma'am, assuredly not," he said, taken aback by her remark. "I was only kidding."

The man easily cut a cart out of the herd. "Remember, you get a free dozen eggs if our courteous checkers fail to greet you and call out the prices," he said, and scurried away.

He was an odd man, she thought, as she pushed her cart over to the produce department. But helpful, she decided, placing a nylon mesh bag of oranges in her cart. At SoSafe she could've struggled with those carts until she'd given herself a cerebral hemorrhage for all the clerk would care.

She glanced at her watch. Nine

o'clock. She'd already missed *Police Beat*, but if she hurried she could get back to the house in time for *California Girls*. If only she'd brought the shopping list, but it was lying on top of the toaster, right where Steve had put it after admitting he'd forgotten the groceries.

Didn't he think she deserved any help with the house? She was plenty busy all day; it wasn't as if he were the only one with important things to do. She had a lot of things to keep on top of, and they were important, too. Soap operas had their own magazine—and even a hotline—and if that didn't mean important business, then what did?

And watching those game shows was extremely worthwhile, too. Not to mention all the valuable information about new cleaning products and other matters she gleaned from the commercials—she was planning on getting on one of those game shows one day and winning a bundle, and wouldn't Steve be surprised then!

Smiling to herself at the thought, she pushed the cart down to the toothpaste section and was about to pick up a tube of Shimmer when a tall and darkly handsome man put his hand on her wrist.

"You brush with Shimmer, don't you?" he asked and smiled, revealing his remarkable dentition—twin rows of perfectly straight, blindingly white teeth.

"Why yes, not that it's any of your business," Linda replied, tugging her arm free.

"I can always tell a Shimmer woman by her incredibly sexy smile." He stepped closer to her, his face inches from hers. "I can't resist you, your sex appeal, your fantastic Shimmer smile," he moaned, and taking her in his arms he kissed her passionately.

She struggled, managing to push him away.

"How dare you!" she said, slapping him across the face. She turned, calling for help. A clerk appeared instantly. At first she thought it was the same one who had helped her with the cart, but then she remembered that he'd been blond, and this man had brown hair.

"May I be of any assistance? All our clerks here at Paymore—where you always pay less, but get so very much more: Paymore—are eager to assist you in any way possible."

"This man—" she turned, but there was nobody there. She looked back at the clerk, he was smiling idiotically, a vacant look in his eyes.

"He was right there—he kissed me."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but there's nobody there."

(continued on page 74)

3RD Place

NEREID

PENI ROBINSON



"I was born in Texas, though since I was an Air Force Brat, I didn't get to stay there. Currently I live with two Michaels, two cats and our combined libraries. If I don't write, I start to imagine things that make life uncomfortable."

'Nereid' was written a couple of years ago, when the air conditioning in my apartment broke down. I took a clipboard to the River Walk, bought some iced tea, and sat there till I had written a story."

The river remembered Simon, for he had never gone away for long. She had kept him fed once—him and his mother and a few brothers and sisters—when he had been young. The WPA might have turned him away on account of his youth, but an uncle with a good position was a valuable thing, so he earned his first dollars building the San Antonio River Walk for the nation.

He was getting old now, with no uncles left to bend the rules, and the river did not see him often. Time was, he would come every week or two, his paycheck in his pocket and his wife in tow, to eat on her banks, and stroll up and down being happy. Now he came once a month, alone, and purchased ice cream with such of his social security check as remained after he subtracted what he would need for rent and groceries. The river understood this, as she understood most things that went on along her banks, through careful listening and long reflection. Nereids are innocent and ignorant no longer—and the San Antonio River would not be, if she could.

"How do you bear it?" asked a depressed young cypress once.

"Bear what?" asked the river, laying his roots with her cool ripples.

"The stone walls—the river taxis—the dreadful people tossing paper cups into you? They're killing you."

"They have changed parts of me, yes," said the river. "I haven't had a good flood since 1943, and I was deeper once. But the stone walls don't extend very far, and because of the restaurants above them, the locals clean out what the strangers throw in, which is more than is done for most rivers. They'll never kill me. They love me—and, more to the point, they need me in their economy."

"They hardly notice you," protested the cypress. "They come down here to eat and drink and get out of the sun."

"Not all the time," replied the river. "I'll show you."

Next time he came, she brought Simon—leading him on, after he ate his ice cream, with the flash of her ripples and the coolness of one of her servant-breezes on his face. She led

him to the bench nearest the cypress and coaxed him to sit down. He relaxed, leaning forward on his cane, watching the movement of the water with tender brown eyes.

"This is one of the men who built my stone walls and laid my cement walks," said the river. "Tell me if I have anything to bear."

"He loves you now because he has no one else left," said the cypress.

"When his children were still shrill small bodies with no thought of leaving home; when his wife was a warm and living woman; when I had not a restaurant to my name, he still looked at me this way. We have been together a long time, he and I, as men measure years."

"Someday he will die," said the cypress, standing straight and still in the afternoon sunlight. "Soon, perhaps. He is of an age and situation that makes a human's heart fail with loneliness and boredom."

"Never mind," said the river. "He is here now."

A young man in blue jeans walked past the bench Simon sat on, tossing a cigarette butt into the soft green water. "He is here now, too," said the cypress. "Does that not bother you?"

"Why should it?" asked the river. "There's lots of men like him in the world. I can't spare time to fret over them all. He's come to work in an ice cream shop for the summer, but he'll go away again."

The ice cream shop was near the bridge under which one rented paddleboats. Simon had not ridden once since his wife died, but he watched them with a reminiscing smile as he ate—all the children, airmen, and young lovers, laughing and splashing and accidentally ramming the stone banks. "My wife, she loved to ride the paddleboats," he said to the young man selling ice cream, whose name was Richard. "When I was working we used to come here after I got paid to buy ice cream and ride the boats. She was always strong in the legs—never went to arthritis, like I did."

"Hey, mama, what's happening?" said Richard to a passing young woman. She did not reply.

That night, after the restaurant and bars were closed, another young woman was raped and robbed under the cypress tree. Marshalling her cold breezes and her shadows, the river tried to warn her and turn her back, but she had some purpose and would not be detained—until she saw the knife. Helpless and horrified, the cypress stood by.

Afterward, the woman cried and Richard went away. Together the cypress and the river whispered to her

NEREID

"Hospital. Hospital." At length she seemed to hear, for she picked herself up and left the walk at Crockett Street, walking straight up the stairs to the all-night emergency center in the Nix Hospital Building.

"And you talk about having nothing to bear," said the cypress.

"I saw much worse than that long before my walls went up," said the river. "Humans will do things like that to one another. They can help it no more than I can help flooding, and need training away from it as much as I—from their point of view—need floodgates. On the whole, I see very little of such behavior anymore, particularly considering how many visit me every night. You've never seen one being violent before, have you?"

"No," said the cypress, reluctantly. "I admit I'm very young."

"While I am very old. You must take my word for some things. Besides, it makes very little odds to us what they do to each other."

Whatever the young woman may have done after she got to the hospital, it was not enough to arrest Richard, for he came to work in the ice cream parlor just as usual. He grumbled about his pay and tried, unsuccessfully, to pick up women. The river conceived a dislike for him.

"You're around humans too much," said the cypress. "They matter to you far more than they should."

"They matter to you, too," the river pointed out.

"They shock me, sometimes, but it isn't the same thing. Anyway, I'm like them. My consciousness is bound to a body, like theirs, but yours isn't."

"These few miles of me are body enough for that. I don't think I could be happy in it, if I didn't come to care a little bit about those who made and use it—and that means disliking, too."

"It means hating," said the cypress, like one who knew.

"Perhaps," said the river.

Simon returned to the river on a hot day in July. "Think I'll have a banana split today," he said, unwrapping the rubber band around the wad of bills that had been his Social Security check.

Richard, as always, gave him his change and watched him fold the roll away in his front pocket. The river, guessing what was in his heart, was glad of the brilliant sunshine and the crowds.

The heat oppressed Simon. Slowly and luxuriously he ate his banana split. "Damn landlord hasn't fixed the air conditioning in my apartment," he grumbled to Richard's uninterested face. "Must be a hundred degrees out today and they won't fix the air."

The river sent her coolest breeze to kiss the withered, creased back of his neck. He smiled into his whipped cream.

SIXTH ANNUAL SHORT STORY CONTEST

They had a good time together that day. Her breezes danced attendance on him as he walked, with ponderous slowness, from one end of her to the other. He ate frugally of her fajitas, admired her young women with dim, grandfatherly eyes, and dozed in the shades of her cypresses for comfortable half-hours. Darkness came down, and he blinked in her lights—the bright lights of her businesses; the green and ghostly lights of her bridges. The first restaurant closed.

Simon had not stayed so late since the days when he had owned a car. The river began to fear he would miss his bus, and blew the first chill breezes of the evening into his wrinkled face. He sighed and shuffled toward the bridge where he went up, by Casa Rio and the paddleboats.

The paddleboat rentals had ceased with darkness, and Casa Rio was closed and dark. The paddleboats were chained together below the bridge, side by side, floating like a crowd of lily pads in the darkness beside the walk. Simon stopped to look at them, shoulders heavy. "My wife, she really loved the paddleboats," he said to no

one in particular. Cautiously he put one foot on the aluminum platform of the nearest, balancing with his cane. The river rocked gently, familiarly, beneath him. With an arthritic's care, he boarded and sat, as the boat bumped softly into the one next to it, and as Richard approached from the darkened ice cream shop.

Simon could not see him, but the river could, and she could also see that just at that moment the nearest possible witnesses were on the opposite bank, unable to see under the bridge even if they cared to. Hurriedly she dismissed all her comfortable breezes and gathered the cold ones from their summer sleep to chill the old man. He shivered, but he was tired, and his response slow. Richard, lounging through the darkness, saw him ease himself to his feet.

Richard saw the old man with the roll of Social Security cash in his pocket, but Simon saw only the young man who sold ice cream, going home with his hands in his pockets. "Good evening," he said. "Have a good day?"

"No," said Richard, advancing. "But it's about to get better." He pulled the knife out of his pocket and snapped open the blade.

Simon sat down quickly, and got up again on the other side of the paddleboat. Richard stood on the edge of the walk. "Where you think you're going?" he laughed. "Look, I seen that big roll of money. You just give it here and you don't get hurt."

"It's not so much money," said Simon. "I need it—my rent—" He moved to the aluminum platform of the next paddleboat.

The river rocked the first boat violently as Richard put his weight on it. "I got rent too, man," he said. "We all got expenses."

Simon scrambled onto the third and last rank of paddleboats. The river tried to steady herself beneath him, but it wasn't easy while attempting to keep Richard off balance. "Hell, that's my money you got there," the young man continued. "They take it out of my pay. So you just give it me back."

The old man moved to the next paddleboat in the third row as Richard approached. His dry, withered fingers fumbled for the rosary in the front pocket of his shirt. The river looked up and down her length, but the tourists and the lovers walked slowly. Neither she nor Simon was stupid enough to think that Richard would rob a man who knew his face and

(continued on page 75)



RAMSEY
CAMPBELL

CHARLES L.
GRANT

TWO VIEWS OF MADNESS

Variations on a Theme by J.K. Potter

Ramsey Campbell and Charles L. Grant are two of the most popular and respected horror writers today. Last year, they were guests of honor, along with illustrator J.K. Potter, at the annual World Fantasy Convention. To commemorate the occasion, both authors were asked to write new stories inspired by Potter's macabre photo montage "Evil Twin". The stories, "The Other Side" by Ramsey Campbell and "An Image in Twisted Silver" by Charles L. Grant, were published for the first time in the convention's limited-edition program book.

After reading the stories, Potter created two new illustrations inspired, in turn, by the works of Campbell and Grant. The stories make their national debut in this issue, along with Potter's original illustrations.

We've also included conversations with both Campbell and Grant, conducted by Stanley Wiater and Douglas Winter, to give you insights into the remarkable minds behind these haunting tales.

THE OTHER SIDE



*The mocking face across the river
saw into the depths of his soul.*

by Ramsey Campbell

ILLUSTRATION BY J. K. POTTER

When Bowring saw where the fire engines were heading, he thought at first it was the school. "They've done it, the young swine," he groaned, craning out of his high window, clutching the cold, dewy sill. Then flames burst from an upper window of the abandoned tenement a mile away across the river, reddening the low clouds. That would be one less place for them to take their drugs and do whatever else they got up to when they thought nobody was watching. "Bow-wow's watching, and don't you forget it," he muttered with a grin that let the night air twinge his teeth, and then he realized how he could.

A taste of mothballs caught at the back of his throat as he took the binoculars from the wardrobe where they hung among his suits. The lenses

pulled the streets across the river toward him, cut-out terraces bunched together closely as layers of wallpaper. The tenement reared up, a coally silhouette flaring red, from the steep bank below them. Figures were converging to watch, but he could see nobody fleeing. He let the binoculars stray upward; to the flames, which seemed calming as a fireside, too silent and distant to trouble him. Then his face stiffened. Above the flames and the jets of water red as blood, a figure was peering down.

Bowring twisted the focusing screw in a vain attempt to get rid of the blur of heat, to clear his mind of what he thought he was seeing. The figure must be trapped, crying for help and jumping as the floor beneath its feet grew hotter, yet it appeared to be prancing with delight, waving its hand

gleefully, grinning like a clown. To believe that was to lose control, he told himself fiercely. A jet of water fought back the flames below the window he was staring at, and he saw that the window was empty.

Perhaps it had always been. If anyone had been crying for help, the firemen must have responded by now. Among the spectators he saw half a dozen of his pupils sharing cigarettes. He felt in control again at once. He'd be having words with them tomorrow.

In the morning he drove ten miles to the bridge, ten miles back along the far bank. The school was surrounded by disorder, wallpaper flapping beyond broken windows, houses barricaded with cardboard against casual missiles, cars stranded without wheels

(continued on page 30)

AN IMAGE IN TWISTED SILVER



*His heart's darkest secrets
lay trapped within the mirror.*

by Charles L. Grant

ILLUSTRATION BY J. K. POTTER

Robert locked the bathroom door when Joann began screaming.

He leaned against it and closed his eyes, felt the sweat on his brow, felt the damp cold under his arms, felt the heel of his left foot tap rhythmically on the floor. In time to his wife's voice. Faster, now slower, now faster again when she realized what he'd done and threw something against the wall. Her words were garbled if words they were at all, and he stopped trying to give them meaning—the sound of her was enough, the anger and the hatred and the overwhelming despair that had begun in her pale eyes when he told her he was going to quit the firm, that traveled in a rippling crescent from one cheek to the other, that settled around her mouth as her tongue licked her lips, as the lips began to tremble while the tears began to well, as her teeth clacked

together as if she were freezing.

The sound of it beginning as a growl in her throat, pitching higher as she backed away from the kitchen table, higher still when she pointed at the stack of envelopes on the counter and demanded to know how the hell she was expected to pay all those bills if he no longer had a job. And why the hell hadn't he talked with her first leaving the house that morning, filled with the power of the righteous, the strength of ideals, the foolishness of the young who thought they'd live forever—because the goddamned bills were over there, stacked on the counter and waiting for the goddamned checks that would never be written because he had principles but no goddamned sense and she was sick of listening to his goddamned sermons about living with himself, about sleeping, about what

had to be done before the world was made right.

He'd said nothing.

She was still screaming.

He'd only watched her pace the kitchen, slamming a hand down, kicking a cabinet door, opening the refrigerator to show him the food that would have to last them a while because they'd just bought a new car, just returned from vacation, just redecorated the front room and their bedroom in anticipation of his raise, and so had raided their savings because it was all going to be just fine. Then she pointed out the window to the backyard where their children were playing and asked him too sweetly how she was expected to explain it to them when all they would understand was that Daddy no longer had to go

(continued on page 31)

OTHER SIDE

(continued from page 28)

and rusting in streets where nothing moved except flocks of litter. Ash from last night's fire settled on his car like an essence of the grubby streets. In the midst of the chaos, the long, low, ruddy school still looked as it must have a hundred years ago. That felt like a promise of order to him.

He was writing a problem in calculus on the blackboard when those of his class who'd come to school today piled into the classroom, jostling and swearing, accompanied by smells of tobacco and cheap perfume. He swung round, gown whirling, and the noise dwindled sullenly. Two minutes' slamming of folding seats, and then they were sitting at their desks, which were too small for some of them. Bowring hooked his thumbs in the shoulders of his gown. "Which of you were at the fire last night?" he said in a voice that barely reached the back of the room.

Twenty-three faces stared dully at him, twenty-three heads of the monster he had to struggle with every working day. There was nothing to distinguish those he'd seen last night across the river, not a spark of truth. "I know several of you were," he said, letting his gaze linger on the six. "I suggest you tell your friends after class that I may have my eye on you even when you think nobody's watching."

They started, challenging him to identify them, and waited until dark to answer him with a scrawl of white paint across the ruined tenement. FUCK OFF, BOW WOW, the message said. The binoculars shook until he controlled himself. He was damned if he'd let them reach him in his home, his refuge from all they represented. Tomorrow he'd deal with them, on his patch of their territory. He moved the binoculars to see what he'd glimpsed as they veered.

A figure was standing by the tenement, under one of the few surviving streetlamps. The mercury-vapor glare made its face look white as a clown's, though at first he couldn't see the face; the long hands that appeared to be gloved whitely were covering it while the shoulders heaved as if miming rage. Then the figure flung its hands

away from its face and began to prance wildly, waving its fists above its spiky hair. It was then that Bowring knew it was the figure he'd seen above the flames.

It must be some lunatic, someone unable to cope with life over there. Suddenly the mercury-vapor stage was bare, and Bowring resisted scanning the dark: whatever the figure was up to had nothing to do with him. He was inclined to ignore the graffiti too, except that next morning, when he turned from the blackboard several of his class began to titter.

He felt his face stiffen, grow pale with rage. That provoked more titters,

He grabbed the binoculars and turned them back to the wall, and came face to face with the clown, who seemed to be grinning straight at him from his hiding place.

the nervous kind he'd been told you heard at horror films. "Very well," he murmured, "since you're all aware what I want to hear, we'll have complete silence until the culprit speaks up."

"But sir, I don't know—" Clint began, pulling at his earlobe where he'd been forbidden to wear a ring in school, and Bowring rounded on him. "Complete silence," Bowring hissed in a voice he could barely hear himself.

He strolled up and down the aisles, sat at his desk when he wanted to outstare them. Their resentment felt like an imminent storm. Just let one of them protest to his face! Bowring wouldn't lay a finger on them—they wouldn't lose him his pension that way—but he'd have them barred from his class. He was tempted to keep them all in after school, except that he'd had enough of the lot of them.

"Wait until you're told to go," he said when the final bell shrilled. He felt unwilling to relinquish his control of them, to let them spill out of his room in search of mischief, sex, drugs,

violence, their everyday lives; for moments that seemed disconcertingly prolonged, he felt as if he couldn't let go. "Perhaps on Monday we can get on with some work, if you haven't forgotten what that's like. Now you may go," he said softly, daring them to give tongue to the resentment he saw in all their eyes.

They didn't, not then. He drove across the bridge to be greeted by the scent of pine, of the trees that April sunlight was gilding. Hours later he lay in his reclining chair, lulled by a gin and tonic, by Debussy on the radio. Halfway through the third movement of the quartet, the phone rang. "Yes?" Bowring demanded.

"Mr. Bowring?"

"Yes?"

"Mr. Bowring the teacher?"

"This is he."

"It's he," the voice said aside, and there was a chorus of sniggers. At once Bowring knew what the voice would say, and so it did: "Fuck off, Bow-wow, you—"

He slammed the phone down before he could hear more, and caught sight of himself in the mirror, white-faced, teeth bared, eyes bulging. "It's all right," he murmured to his mother in the photograph on the mantelpiece below the mirror. But it wasn't: now they'd found him, they could disarray his home life any time they felt like it; he no longer had a refuge. Who had it been on the phone? One of the boys with men's voices, Darren or Gary or Lee. He was trying to decide which when it rang again.

No, they wouldn't get through to him. Over the years he'd seen colleagues on the teaching staff break down, but that wouldn't happen to him. The phone rang five times in the next hour before they gave up. Since his mother's death he'd only kept the phone in case the school needed to contact him.

Sunlight woke him in the morning, streaming from behind his house and glaring back from the river. The sight of figures at the charred tenement took him and his binoculars to the window. But they weren't any of his pupils, they were a demolition crew. Soon the tenement puffed like a fungus, hesitated, then collapsed. Only a rumble like distant thunder and a microscopic clink of bricks reached him. The crowd of bystanders dispersed, and even the demolition crew drove away before the dust had finished settling. Bowring alone saw

(continued on page 84)

IMAGE

(continued from page 29)

to work in the morning, that Daddy had decided there was no future in the law if the law wouldn't insure a future for those who loved it, for those who enforced it, for those who tried to make it affordable for those who needed it the most. How, she wanted to know, opening and closing drawers, still kicking at the doors, was she going to explain his professional suicide to their friends, and their family, and to herself when all she wanted was not to return to the rundown places they'd lived in while he'd studied, and if that was too much to ask why the hell were they still married.

He'd said nothing.

She was still screaming.

He opened his eyes and looked left, to the mirror over the basin, and to his face looking back. Distorted because of a flaw in the surface, a whorl and a bulge that elongated his neck and turned his hair to wire and gave his lips a silly smirk when he stood in the wrong spot while he was shaving. He shrugged at it now, wondering for a moment why it seemed so young, the way he used to be young, back in the days when he believed so damned strongly in everything he believed.

He laid his head back, feeling rage make the door tremble, feeling his own anger stiffen his spine and tighten his buttocks and finally force him to stand upright and turn around, hands in fists, ready to go after her and compel her to understand that it wasn't *he* who had changed since their days in college and their first day of marriage and their first years together as they dreamed of modest wealth, modest family, modest hopes; it wasn't *he* who had fallen in love with the checks that could be written every month while he wrote the briefs dealing with the homeless and the unwanted that made local history; and it wasn't *he* who almost laughed when he almost cried at the turnabout the office made the week before when one of his court appearances had failed, had reached the papers, had made him look like a Quixote in a three-piece suit and school tie.

He didn't move.

She was still screaming.

And he knew she was afraid.

He understood, though she didn't know it, what the future would be like until he was back on his feet, in his own office, in another town.

He was willing to take the risk. Like Scrooge after the Phantom had shown him the grave, he had come to loathe the cynicism and the defeatism that were cloaked in excuses of the real world, when the real world was only an excuse for old failures perpetuated on the young.

She hadn't listened when he tried to explain; she thought he was kidding.

She hadn't listened when he told her he couldn't take it anymore.



But she had listened this afternoon when he'd given her the news—with the ear that had heard the cries of their first child in that place they had tried to make a home when all it was was a hovel; with the ear that had heard him swear on his love for her and the boy that he would never permit them to live that way again.

Something hard crashed against the door.

He stepped back too quickly and the grey rug beneath him almost slipped out from under his feet. He grabbed for the basin counter and steadied himself, shook himself, winked. I'm all right to his worried still-young reflection, and was astonished to see the tears in his eyes.

I'm not wrong, he told himself suddenly, fearing she had discovered a weakness; I'm not wrong. I'm not. I'm right, and you know it.

His children probably wouldn't understand, that much was true, and the only thing he could do was pray that understanding would come as they grew older. He loved them too much to deliberately hurt them, and

he counted on their love for the support he would need even though they'd be blinded.

There was quiet.

Joann stopped her screaming.

His reflection lifted an eyebrow, and he turned to the door, wondering what she was up to, turned back and saw the expression on his face. A young face, doubting, and darkening with an anger he couldn't feel. He shook his head. Distortions trembled. He stepped away and scrubbed his cheeks with his palms until the imperfections in the mirror had him strangling himself.

"Jesus," he said, and looked away quickly.

Something leaned against the door, and he heard Joann whisper his name. Not a begging. And not a quiet screaming. A name, nothing more, telling him the tantrum was over and she was ready to talk.

He stared at the glass doorknob, at the towels on the rack, at his bathrobe on the hook near the top of the door.

"It's been so long," he heard her say. "Robert, it's been so long."

He closed his eyes briefly. Not denying, but holding her away, trying to keep her from telling him what he already knew. Too long in the trenches, too long for them to return.

He knew that.

He wasn't stupid.

He wasn't so much the fool that he hadn't coveted what he now had, hadn't worked the miserably long hours in order to build up what his banker not so laughingly called his estate, hadn't dreamt of even more until he was given the assignment to defend a charitable group who showed him the alleys and the gutters and the trash and the people who lived there because they'd grown too thin to walk the cracks; until he looked at them and remembered how his father had worked double shifts and his mother had worked as well and how his education had been paid for in their dying; until he came home one evening and was so filled with love at the sight of his wife and the sounds of his son and new daughter that he felt at once blessed, and disgusted with himself. A disgust because he knew that to beat the system he had worked in it, and in working in it had become lost, and in getting lost had lost his life. Sentiment, he told himself.

His reflection stretched and widened and collapsed upon itself.

Easier for the rich, not so easy for those who caused it.

(continued on page 87)



A Conversation With RAMSEY CAMPBELL

By
Stanley Wiater

Publisher's Weekly has called Ramsey Campbell "a horror writer's horror writer." At sixteen, his first collection of stories, *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964), was published by August Derleth's legendary Arkham House. Now, at age forty-one, these spare lines of biography are placed by his American hardcover publisher in each of his books: "Ramsey Campbell has won more awards for his horror fiction than any other living writer. He lives in England."

Campbell has long been considered one of the most stylish practitioners of the art of literary terror, and a listing of some of his most ardent fans reads like a Who's Who of horror fiction: Stephen King, Peter Straub, Robert Bloch, Whitley Strieber, and David Morrell. Though concentrating on novels in recent years, he is often considered our finest writer of horror short stories.

Among the many books which Campbell has seen published over the past twenty years are the novels *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, *The Parasite*, *The Nameless*, *Incarinate*, *Obsession*, and his most recent, last summer's *The Hungry Moon*. Short story collections include 1973's groundbreaking *Demons by Daylight*, as well as *The Height of the Scream*, *Dark Companions*, and *Cold Print*. (The last a reworking of the "Cthulhu

Mythos" stories originally published in *Inhabitant of the Lake*. His anthologies include *The Gruesome Book*, which Campbell specifically intended for younger readers in that some of the stories are the very same ones which terrified him as a child.

Besides his numerous award-winning short stories, Campbell is perhaps best known for a short novel with the innocuous title *The Face That Must Die*. Originally published as a heavily edited paperback original in England in 1979, the book remained unpublished in the United States primarily due to the fact that its subject matter was so unrelentingly grim and downbeat that none of the major publishers believed it had any possible chance for commercial success. Specialty publisher *Scream/Press* then brought out a limited hardcover edition in 1983, restoring the deleted text, and including an incredibly revealing autobiographical essay by Campbell. One critic termed it "probably the most disturbing piece of non-fiction that I have ever read. If there was such a thing as a Petri dish for the breeding of horror writers, then his childhood would be the model."

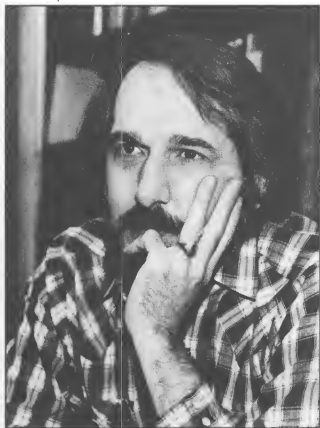
Yet in spite of having an undeniably "warped" childhood, we found Ramsey Campbell to be as cheerful and normal as any one of us. Of course.

WIATER: Tell us a little about your new short story collection which has a deceptive title, when you really think about it.

CAMPBELL: *Scream/Press* has done a volume of all my erotic horror stories. [Fall 1986] And its title—which I don't take any responsibility for!—is *Scared Stiff*. [Laughs.] I shouldn't say it's all my erotic horror short stories; it's actually a group of stories that have been published in England, but were never published in America. Now you could technically regard "Again" as an erotic horror story, I suppose, but that's more of a horror story on an erotic theme. The erotica is much stronger in these stories; it's more central. And two of the stories in it have never been published before, anywhere. I've also done one third of the next *Night Visions* anthology for *Dark Harvest*, with Clive Barker and Lisa Tuttle being the other two writers included. And the last one of mine is an exceedingly strange story. I mean, editor George R. R. Martin told me, "Okay, do something that nobody else would publish." So I have! [Laughs.]

WIATER: Which makes us think of the dozens of Stephen King imitators out there in the marketplace. Yet in spite of your prominence in the field, there don't seem to be any obvious Ramsey Campbell imitators. How do you feel about that?

(continued on page 88)



A Conversation With CHARLES L. GRANT

By Douglas Winter

Ask any writer of horror fiction to name his favorite contemporaries, and the chances are good that Charles L. Grant will rank at the top of the list.

In a little more than a decade, Grant has published thirteen novels and scores of stories of what he likes to call "dark fantasy." His fiction has captured the readership and praise of horror, fantasy, and science-fiction fandom—gathering, along the way, more World Fantasy Award nominations than any other person. With his *Shadows* series, now in its tenth annual hardcover installment, and numerous other collections—including *Nightmares* (1979), *Horrors* (1981), *Terrors* (1982), *Fears* (1983), *Midnight* (1985), and *Greystone Bay* (1985)—he is the premiere anthologist of the modern horror story nurturing and guiding the careers of countless young writers.

But until recently, Charles L. Grant seemed typecast as a writer's writer, known and admired by the aficionados, yet never tapping the mass market via bestsellers or motion picture sales. Then, in 1986, his newest novel, *The Pet*, saw print in a major hardcover edition, and was immediately optioned for film by Columbia Pictures. His short story "Temperature Days on Hawthorne Street" was soon adapted (as "The Milkman Cometh") by Tales from the Darkside.

Grant's fiction has rarely courted popular tastes. He champions "quiet horror," eschewing graphic images of sex and violence in favor of character studies and foreboding atmosphere. His manifesto, exercised in his "Oxrun Station" novels and short stories (soon to be reissued in paperback by Tor Books), holds that our deepest fears stem not from blood or gore or monsters, but from "all that we do not see, even though we know it is there."

Charles L. Grant lives in rural Newton, New Jersey, with his wife Kathy, a talented novelist known for her romance and horror fiction. When I talked with him, on a chilly Sunday afternoon in November, he was battling his son in a bizarre computer game, on break from his novel-in-progress, tentatively titled *The House of Night*.

WINTER: How did it feel, after more than a decade of work, suddenly to find yourself with a prominent hardcover, a motion picture deal, and a television adaptation all within the space of a few weeks?

GRANT: Nerve-wracking. And not quite believable. I still don't believe any of it: I won't believe the TV show until I see it. I won't believe the movie until I see it. I won't believe anything until I see another hardcover.

WINTER: Do you see this popular success as any kind of vindication of

your work—as a reward for holding true to the kind of horror fiction that you believed in?

GRANT: Yes. I guess it proves that I wasn't wrong in doing what I was doing. In not changing my style or subject matter just to make the books more commercial.

I've never been able to write in a commercial style. And I don't like trying to write that way. In the commercial horror novel, lots of things happen; but my novels aren't action-oriented. They are atmospheric, emotion-oriented; they don't move very quickly. Very little happens.

I write winter books: they're not subway reads, but meant for slow reading, in front of the fire on long winter nights.

I knew that what I was doing was right, at least for me. And now, after twenty years, I'm an overnight success. WINTER: What is it about a Charles L. Grant novel that makes it unequivocally your own?

GRANT: I write what I like to read. And I like to read books about people. Books that deal with real people involved in real situations. Books about life: real life.

All of my stories and novels have one thing in common: they're "people" stories, in the sense that my characters have real-world problems, whether it's dealing with parents, or dealing with fi-

(continued on page 90)

THE MAN WHO DEVOURED LITERATURE

Without warning, Dempsey's life had become an open book.

by George Alec Effinger

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID CELSI

Everyone seemed to agree that because Devin Dempsey was single and sitting pretty, he had to be looking for a wife.

That shows you what everyone knows. Dempsey had the same attitude toward marriage that he had toward major surgery: someday they both might be a good idea, but in the meantime—well, if you've got your health, you've got everything. That didn't stop his friends from planning all sorts of loathsome occasions to get him together with a succession of absolutely perfect young women. Sometimes it took all of Dempsey's skill and intelligence to extricate himself from what threatened to be a truly rewarding relationship.

The worst times were when someone he knew had a wedding. He'd go to the reception and have to put up

with one lame hint after another. "Well, you're next, Devin!" or "Devin, just think of all the nice presents you'd get!" Dempsey would just clutch his drink tighter and let his face flicker a little toward a smile. Then he'd stride purposefully off toward a deserted corner of the room.

When his cousin Arlina got married, he spent the first twenty minutes at the reception trying to overcome the strong feeling that he'd been there before. Not that it had anything to do with Arlina. It wasn't her wedding that gave him such déjà vu. Yet there was something about the party that was specifically, almost frighteningly familiar. He shrugged off the notion and concentrated instead on deciding which of the female guest had been invited with him in mind. It was like being caught in the middle of a fierce





MAN

battle; he knew that somewhere out there was a woman with his name on her. He glanced around nervously, taking therapeutic gulps of his whiskey sour. Then, inevitably, a short, plump, plain woman, no doubt with a great personality, came right for him. There was nowhere for Dempsey to hide. He swallowed some more of his drink as fast as he could.

"Hi," she said gaily, "I work with Arlina in Accounts Payable. My name's Kati. What's yours?"

Dempsey held up his glass. "Whiskey sour," he said.

She laughed. "No, I mean, what's your name and where do you work?"

"Devin Dempsey. I work for Bonano Hanna Gallo, I write copy."

"Bonano Hanna Gallo. That sounds like that old song, 'The Name Game.' You remember that one? 'Bonano Hanna Gallo, Fee Fi Mo Mallo.' You remember? You know which one I'm talking about?"

No, Dempsey thought, this woman couldn't be the one Arlina had aimed at him. Not even Arlina could be that cruel. His dream partner was still lurking nearby. It would be dangerous to relax his watchfulness. He looked at Kati. "It's been just wonderful talking with you. We'll have to do this again sometime. Maybe we can have a dance later."

She smiled. "I'd love that. Now, don't forget. We've got a date."

In your next life, Dempsey thought. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He had survived the first menace.

As Kati moved away, the certainty that he had witnessed this event months ago, years ago, took hold of him. It was so powerful that he staggered while walking toward the refreshment tables. Sure, he'd been to other parties, other wedding receptions that had a general resemblance, but he was certain that the feeling went deeper than that. It was unpleasant, tantalizing, and faintly ominous.

Dempsey's cousin Shelton, Arlina's brother, came up to him in his rented sky-blue tux. "Having a good time, Dev?" he asked. The reception wasn't half an hour old, and already Shelton was slurring his words and trying to walk the way sober people do.

"Yeah," said Dempsey. He looked

at his own empty glass.

"You know the girls are unhappy with you. They say you're acting conceited. You're not mixing. Enjoy yourself, buddy, loosen up! People are getting the idea you think you're too good for them."

"Maybe there's some truth in that. Anyway, I don't enjoy this kind of shindig, Shelton."

The bride's brother frowned. "Okay, so maybe you don't. At least make an effort for Arlina's sake. Everybody knows you've got some money and a great career. You're the most eligible bachelor here. Why don't you just try to have a good time?"

Dempsey returned the book to its place, wondering if he should feel bad that his life seemed to be turning into a road company rehash of Western literature.

"I am having a good time."

"Have you danced with anybody?"

Dempsey shrugged. "No. I don't feel like dancing."

"And you've only talked to the family and a few people you've known for years."

"That's not true. I talked to this woman named Kati."

"Yeah, I watched that. You got rid of her as fast as you could. I've heard people say you're too arrogant for your own good, and that you shouldn't expect many invitations from now on."

"I'll tell you, Shelton," said Dempsey. "I'm not as crushed as you might think."

"Have you met Janie, the girl I've been dancing with?"

"She's the only good-looking woman in the room."

"Well, her sister Elizabeth is right over there. Let me introduce you."

"Her? I guess she's all right, but she's no raving beauty. What are you trying to do? Match me up with all the wallflowers you know?"

"Quiet, Dev, she can hear you.

Look, you hurt her feelings." Shelton looked at him like Dempsey was temporarily mental, then shook his head and walked away. Dempsey himself wondered at his own rudeness. It wasn't like him to offend innocent strangers. It was true that he wasn't enjoying himself, but that was no reason to act like a lout.

When it was time to go, he went up to Shelton and apologized. Shelton frowned and poked Dempsey in the chest. "Don't tell me you're sorry. I think you should have said something to Elizabeth. And you could have mentioned something to Arlina before she left, too. What's wrong with you today?"

"I don't know," Dempsey said glumly. "Look, let me have this Elizabeth's address. I'll write her a note and beg her pardon."

Shelton nodded. "It's the least you could do."

Dempsey drove home, thinking about what had happened that afternoon. He was positive that he'd experienced that reception once before, and he vaguely remembered all the details: the dancing, the same unattractive and empty-headed women, his own unusually proud behavior, someone telling him to go ahead and have fun, the feeling that everyone else was whispering about him, the general air of disapproval. When had it happened? Some office Christmas party? Some time he had gone out to a disco or a singles' party? His high school prom, maybe?

That was close. High school; Dempsey was sure there was some connection there, if only he could remember. Those years were disappearing into the gray fog of forgetfulness, and on the whole he was grateful. When he got home, he went into his library and tried to recall where he'd stashed his old yearbooks. He stared at the bookshelves, lost in thought. Then, suddenly, his hand moved toward a book he hadn't seen in years. Here, he knew, in some way was the answer to the mystery. *Pride and Prejudice*. Jane Austen. Tenth grade.

He pulled the book off the shelf and rifled through the pages. With a start, he realized that the main character's name was Elizabeth, the same as the woman he'd insulted. And Elizabeth's sister, both in the novel and at the reception, was named Jane. In the third chapter, there was the account of a ball at which the author introduced Mr. Bingham and the disagreeable Mr.

Darcy. Dempsey was spooked by the close parallel between the fictional dance and the uncomfortable time he'd just had at Arlina's wedding reception. Of course, Bingham was Shelton and Darcy was Dempsey. In the beginning of the novel, Darcy was presented as a completely detestable person, and Dempsey had to admit that the description had fit him too well. Then he got another shock: he read lines of dialogue written in 1813 that echoed what he and Shelton had said to each other not an hour ago.

Dempsey returned the book to its place, feeling like he'd just stumbled across the line into the Twilight Zone. He even heard Rod Serling's voice telling him what an idiot he was. For the life of him, though, Dempsey couldn't figure out what the point was. You always learned some kind of moral or irony in the Twilight Zone. What was the universe trying to say to him? After a while, after two ham sandwiches and five big martinis, he shrugged it off. He forgot that shrugging it off was the mistake everybody always made in the Twilight Zone.

The only lasting effect of the wedding celebration was a fight the next day in a small, dark bar on Chartres Street. Dempsey was having a drink with another idea man, a friend from his college days named Morrissey, who also had been at Arlina's party. They were eating big muffled sandwiches and drinking gin and tonics, talking about the young secretary the president of their agency had hired for himself. Halfway through the lunch, Shelton came up to their table. He stood there glaring down at both men. He might have been drunk.

"Where's Jane?" he demanded.

Dempsey explained to Morrissey that Jane was the woman Shelton had been dancing with at the reception. "I don't know," he said.

"You know where she is?"

"The last I saw her, she was going home."

"She's not there."

"Well, then I don't know where she is."

"Any ideas?"

Dempsey looked up at Shelton. Shelton didn't look well. "Hey, stop looming over me. I don't have the faintest idea where she is."

"That's what I figured you'd say!"

Dempsey was getting angry. "Why don't you just knock it off?"

"You tell me where Jane is."

"Where do you get the nerve, ordering me around?"

"Then you do know where she

is."

"Even if I knew, I wouldn't tell you."

"Oh, go to hell, Shelton," said Morrissey. "I saw her leave the party with some guy I didn't know."

"You shut up."

"Oh, go to hell," Morrissey said softly.

"Is what he said the truth?"

Shelton asked Dempsey.

"Leave us alone!"

"Is that where she went?"

"Leave us alone!"

"I'll make you tell me."

Dempsey got halfway out of his chair and took a half-hearted swing at



Shelton. Shelton ducked his head, then punched Dempsey and knocked him out of his seat to the cool tile floor of the bar. Dempsey got up and Shelton hit him twice more. In a little while, after Morrissey poured a glass of water on him, Dempsey came to. His head throbbed.

Shelton had left.

"How long have I been out?" Dempsey asked.

"Just a couple of minutes. It's still lunch time."

Dempsey stared at his half-finished muffledetta. "Did that little entertainment remind you of anything, Mark?"

"Remind me of anything? No, what do you mean? Cassius Clay and Sonny Liston? What the hell are you talking about?"

"I need to go home. Tell Old Man Hanna I'm taking the afternoon off."

Morrissey shrugged. "You go home and lie down. Try to figure out what Shelton was talking about."

Dempsey gingerly touched his jaw. "The trouble is, I think I know. I'll see you in the morning."

"Don't worry about the check, I'll

get it. Your turn tomorrow."

"Thanks, Mark. See you later."

The first thing Dempsey did when he got home was to take three Percodan. The second thing was to stand trembling in his library, gazing at his fine collection of books. He was not surprised when again one volume seemed to draw all his attention. *The Sun Also Rises*. He opened it to Chapter XVII and read the part where Robert Cohn punches out Jake Barnes in a jealous rage over Brett Ashley. Needless to say, the fictional argument that preceded the violence was the same argument Dempsey'd had with Shelton, virtually word-for-word. Dempsey wondered if he should feel bad that his life seemed to be turning into a road company rehash of Western literature, or happy that, if his destiny needed to steal from somebody, it had picked sources of the stature of Jane Austen and Ernest Hemingway.

Now, as Shelton had remarked, Dempsey had a good deal of money through his family, and he didn't need to work writing copy for a local advertising agency. He did it because he often enjoyed the creative aspect of the job, and because he intended to buy the agency outright when he understood more about the business. Like many wealthy people, Dempsey'd had the advantage of a weekly appointment with a psychoanalyst since he'd been eleven years old. Although he'd been seeing the same doctor for seventeen years, Dempsey still called him "Dr. Foucher." They definitely weren't friends, despite all they'd been through together. Every year, Dempsey sent Dr. Foucher a Christmas card, but the analyst never hung it up in his waiting room or acknowledged it in any way.

"Well, everything go all right this week?" asked Dr. Foucher as usual. It was like daring Dempsey to disagree.

"Yes, pretty much," said Dempsey.

"Although a couple of strange things happened," Dempsey went on. "I went to my cousin's wedding, and at the reception I had a rotten time. It was as dull and boring as any party I've been to in years. Well, my cousin's brother came over and told me I should be acting like I was having a good time. Finally, I just left and went home. A little while later, I just happened to be reading a book, *Pride and Prejudice*, you know? And there's a scene in the book exactly like the party I'd just come from, down to the conversation I had with Shelton. I don't mean there was just a vague

(continued on page 76)





THE LEASH

*The creature that slept beside her
was waking at last from
its long slumber.*

by Pamela Sargent

ILLUSTRATION BY PATRICK PIGOTT

Carla was half-awake when she heard the mournful moan, the sound of a man in torment. The mattress shifted under her as the moan became a shriek. Clutching at the blanket, she struggled to sit up.

Ted was having a nightmare. She reached toward him; he let out another cry, sat up suddenly, then bolted from their bed. He landed on his feet and leaped toward the door, covering the floor in two bounds. "Who's there?" he muttered. "Whazit—who's there?"

Carla squinted, barely able to see him in the dim blue light of their digital clock. "No one's there," she said wearily. "It's all right, you're only dreaming. Come back to bed, it's all right, you're safe."

"Can't you hear it? Someone's out there." He yanked the door open with such force that she was afraid he might pull it from its hinges.

"No one's there," she said more firmly. "Everything's fine." He swayed uncertainly, then stumbled toward the bed, mumbling under his breath as he collapsed next to her. She stretched out again and waited until his even breathing told her he was sleeping soundly.

Carla folded her arms, embracing her resentment. Ted not only talked in

his sleep, but he also walked, alerted her to imagined dangers, debated with her, and made broad jumps across the bedroom that might have won him medals in track and field events had he been able to make them while conscious. He never remembered anything about his nocturnal activities, however much they disturbed her. He had slept quietly enough for several months with only an occasional indistinct murmur. She had believed he had overcome his somnambulism at last, but during the past week, his problem had worsened.

What annoyed her most now was her conviction that he would begin to toss and turn just as she was dozing off; she was afraid to go to sleep. She bit her lip; he tensed next to her, as though sensing her anger. She did not have to worry that he might injure himself inadvertently; somehow his usual caution protected him even in his dreams. He might fling open the front door, but never ran outside in his pajamas; he could navigate through their one-story house without bumping into the furniture. It was as though he was deliberately trying only to interfere with her sleep.

She knew he would start to act up again as soon as she was falling asleep; he seemed to pick up her

LEASH

thoughts and fears. She could almost imagine that she was, however unwillingly, controlling his actions. He would tug at the sheets, perhaps, or pick up the bedroom telephone to bark a greeting at a non-existent caller. She pulled the sheet over her head, trying to relax.

She had just found a comfortable position when Ted let out a shriek; the telephone receiver clattered against the night table. "Hello?" he shouted. "Hello?"

Carla moaned, wanting to be grateful he hadn't turned on the overhead light.

As usual, Carla had to get up early in order to rouse her apparently comatose husband. Their routine rarely varied. She prodded him when she rose, poked at him again after taking her shower, set his orange juice next to the clock before she got dressed. The juice was almost always untouched by the time the coffee was ready, and she often had to nag him into eating the breakfast she brought to him on a tray.

This morning, Ted drank the juice and coffee without protesting, but she had to pull him to his feet and aim him toward the bathroom. His grogginess was hardly surprising; Ted was more active when asleep than many people were while awake. At least he hadn't unplugged the digital clock to protect it from an imaginary power surge, as he had a few nights ago; the alarm had never gone off and they had awakened only when his car pool arrived.

She stared at her face in the bedroom mirror, noting the dark smudges under her eyes. Ted's blow-dryer hummed beyond the bathroom door. Carla assumed that he was fully conscious now, but with Ted, it was sometimes hard to tell. He was capable of hollering questions at her while still asleep, questions that almost made sense until he followed his coherent inquiries with a stream of gibberish. She swatted at her face with a makeup brush; the blusher on her cheeks only made her eyes seem redder.

She turned as he left the bathroom and began to rummage in the

closet. "I can't take much more," she said. "Are you trying to drive me nuts? Why can't you sleep like a normal person?"

He closed the closet door. "How am I supposed to control myself when I'm asleep?"

"You could do something about it. It's got to be a symptom. Why don't you see a doctor and—"

"I don't have time for this. Doug'll be here any minute." He adjusted his briefs, then pulled on his slacks.

"Why don't you sleep during the day? I'll bet no one at work would notice the difference—if anything, they'd find you more lively. You ruin

Carla counted her breaths, waiting for sleep to come. She was sure that Ted's unconscious mind was making preparations, waiting for the right moment to strike.

my sleep, and then I have to struggle out of bed early to make sure you get up on time. I can't stand it."

Ted opened his mouth to reply; a horn beeped outside. He stepped into his shoes, grabbed his jacket, and hurried from the room.

Even before they finished supper, Carla was dreading the night ahead, wondering how many times Ted would wake her. She recalled reading a piece about how totalitarian regimes treated people they wanted to break; one technique was to keep waking a prisoner, refusing to let him sleep. Ted would break her; he might do worse. She had read about a man who had strangled his wife in his sleep, then claimed to have no memory of his deed. She shuddered, afraid even to let such a thought cross her mind.

By the time she had put the dishes away, Ted was sprawled on the sofa, leaning through a technical journal while glancing at the television set. He could sit there, barely moving, for hours. Carla had learned to distrust this apparent calm, which was now

only the prelude to a tumultuous night. No wonder he was so active while sleeping; it was practically the only exercise he got. Where was the Ted she had known and loved and decided to marry? He had become a man who seemed asleep while awake and awake when sleeping.

He looked up at the television screen. "Joan Collins still looks pretty good," he mumbled.

"Joan Collins probably gets her sleep."

He let the journal slide to the floor. "Was I that bad?"

"Not really. You only screamed a couple of times and you didn't interrogate me. You didn't turn on the lights or pull off all the sheets. I'm exhausted—this is the second time I've been late to work this week."

"That reminds me. I may be home late for a few days or so. Wannisky's pressuring all the engineers in my department to—"

"Good," she interrupted. "Maybe I can get in a nap before you come home. Maybe you can even get them to put a bed in your office so I can get some sleep."

"Look, it's not my fault. I've had sleep disturbances all my life. My mother had them. It's a family trait."

"They're supposed to go away," she insisted. "You're supposed to outgrow them. You're almost thirty years old. How much older do you have to get?"

"Maybe it's temporary," he said. "It wasn't that bad until recently, was it?"

"It might be a sign of some problem. Go to a doctor."

"I had a checkup just a few weeks ago."

"You weren't sleepwalking then. Now it's almost every night. I'm afraid to go to bed, and then I can barely get up. I'm afraid I'll fall asleep when I'm driving to work."

"You can't blame a guy for what he does when he's asleep."

"You could do something about it," she shouted. "There has to be a cause."

He was eyeing the journal, as if wanting to pick it up. He hated arguments, she knew; he went out of his way to avoid scenes. "Maybe it's your fault," he said softly.

Carla was too angry to speak for a moment, then recalled how she had felt the night before, when it had almost seemed that Ted was acting on her expectations. That idea was absurd. "My fault?" she said at last. "How can it be my fault?"

"I've been under pressure at work, and then you expect me to fix the plumbing or take you out instead of relaxing on the weekend. Or you give me that hurt look when I invite the guys over to watch a game. You don't think of me at all. I didn't have that much of a problem when we were living together."

"So now you're blaming it on our marriage."

"You take me for granted. You don't listen to me when I'm awake, so maybe I'm trying to get your attention when I'm asleep."

She bridled at the injustice of his words. "That isn't fair. I made three errors at the bank today, and if the customers hadn't caught them right away—I have to get some sleep. I'm just about ready to move into the guest bedroom."

Ted shook his head. "Oh, no. My mother always said that was the beginning of the end. First, it's twin beds, then separate bedrooms, then appointments with lawyers."

"She ought to know," Carla snapped. "No wonder she had three divorces—her husbands probably never got any sleep."

"Can't you leave my mother out of this?"

"You brought her up!"

"Why don't you go to bed early? I'll be up for a while, and you can be asleep before I come to bed." He glanced at the television screen, where Joan Collins, dressed in a silk peignoir and holding a champagne glass, was apparently preparing to retire.

Carla stood up and strode toward the bedroom.

She was unable to sleep, or course. She kept her eyes closed as Ted slipped under the sheets and wondered if he might be calmed by sex, but was too angry to make any advances.

Carla counted her breaths, commanding sleep to come, yet knowing that as soon as it did, Ted would tear the covers from her or bound toward the door. He lay still, snorting slightly at the end of each even breath. That was another thing for her to resent, his ability to nod off within moments of hitting the pillow, to calmly stack his z's before beginning to plague her.

I know what you're up to, she thought. Ted had implied that he regretted their marriage, but would never admit it outright. He had no conscious desire to follow in his parents' footsteps to the divorce court. But his unconscious mind was craftier, would do its best to drive her away

by interfering with her sleep. She would be forced to leave him just to preserve her sanity, and he could always believe that the break was not really his fault.

His unconscious mind, she was sure, was just waiting for the right moment to strike; she could almost sense it making preparations. It wouldn't stop with forcing Ted to toss and turn; he might be propelled to the light switch and then sent on a search for monsters lurking in the closet or under the bed. Ted slept on; she felt herself drifting into oblivion.

The mattress bounced under her. Ted yelled, threw off the covers, and



stumbled toward the light switch. Carla moaned as the room was illuminated. "There it is!" Ted shrieked. He dropped down and crawled toward her. "See it? There it is!" He pointed under the bed.

"Nothing's there," she responded as calmly as she could. He uttered a stream of gibberish and shook his head violently.

"I can't stand it any more!" Carla screamed as she sat up. Ted sat back on his heels and stared at her. "You've got to stop it!" She was doing exactly what his mother had warned her against, trying to shock him into awareness instead of soothing him into calm. But then his mother's unconscious was probably in collusion with Ted's. Carla had always suspected that his mother had been dubious about their marriage; maybe if the woman hadn't catered to her son, Ted wouldn't have had this problem now. "If you're not going to let me sleep," she continued, "I'll be damned if I'll let you."

He blinked as he gazed back dreamily. "That isn't very rational," he replied.

"I don't care. If you insist on

keeping me awake, you can at least keep me company."

"That isn't what I'd call a constructive attitude."

She rubbed at her eyes. She could not even be sure he was awake now, and kept waiting to hear the indecipherable words that would prove he was only aping consciousness.

"You've got to get treatment," she said.

"That won't help. If I repress this, I risk cutting myself off from my creative flow, the thing that makes me able to do my work. My mind has to break out somehow. My sleep disturbances are the expression of—"

"I don't care what they are! It's got to stop!"

"I have a problem I'm trying to solve, and you're only making it worse. You're disappointed in me, you think you made a mistake, and I'm picking that up." He got to his feet slowly. "You could ease me, but you don't really want to help—you're just thinking of yourself. You'd rather blame me for what's wrong with you." He turned off the light, stumbled back to bed, and lay down next to her; within moments, he was snoring softly.

She looked down at him, appalled. His unconscious had clearly spewed out that nonsense and had done so without a single cryptic word or dejected shriek. His lips moved, as if he were confirming her suspicions.

Carla managed to catch up on some of her sleep that weekend during the day, while enduring Ted's restlessness at night. Feeling somewhat restored, she decided to take Ted—or his unconscious—at his word. She would solve the problem by trying to soothe him before he slept.

Their evening routine changed. Ted was often home late, but she forced herself to greet him cheerfully and prepared foods that would not give him indigestion. She offered him Ovaltine or brandy before he slept and gave him alcohol rubs before helping him on with his pajamas. She brought a cassette player and tapes designed to produce soothing sounds for insomniacs. She had sex with him even when she wasn't in the mood in the hope that this might drain some of his nocturnal energy.

Yet after a week, she saw no results. Ted cried out and sleepwalked through the house as much as before. She not only had the task of getting him up in the morning, but also the

(continued on page 80)

GENERAL JARUZELSKI AT THE ZOO

*At night the animals dream of the
freedom that lies beyond
the iron bars.*

by George Zebrowski

ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT EAGLE

"Even a flounder takes sides."

—Stanislaw J. Lec

Maciek the chimp saw General Jaruzelski coming down the gravel path that ran by his cage. There were two men with him. One was looking around nervously, as if he had lost something; the other was the zookeeper.

Maciek endured his hunger cramps, believing that if he performed well enough the visitors would give him a banana.

Maciek jumped up and down.

The General failed to notice.

Maciek did a backflip.

Still the General paid no attention. He seemed to be hiding behind his dark glasses.

Maciek leaped onto the bars and shook them.

The General stopped and smiled.

This was it! Maciek was sure that the bananas were close by; his cramps would soon end.

Maciek rattled the bars until his arms and shoulders hurt.

The zookeeper began to talk to the General.

Maciek's eyes watered from the pains. He lay down and held his belly. There had been no bananas for so long now, and there would be no

bananas again today.

"It's been difficult for us lately, General," the Director of the zoo said softly. "I appreciate your stopping by to take notice of our problems."

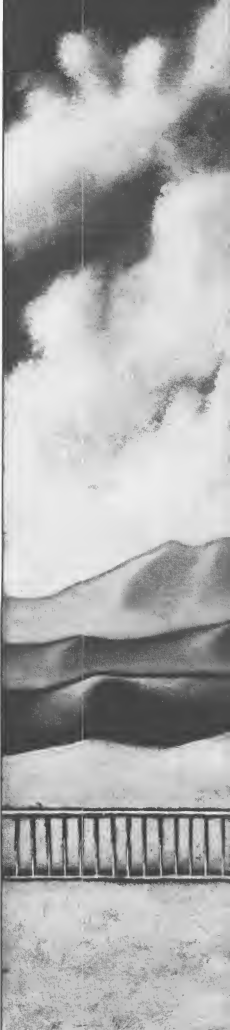
The General smiled at the diplomacy of the Director's words, but the truth was otherwise. Nostalgia for the zoological pleasures of his boyhood had prodded the General to come here during his lunch hour, nothing more.

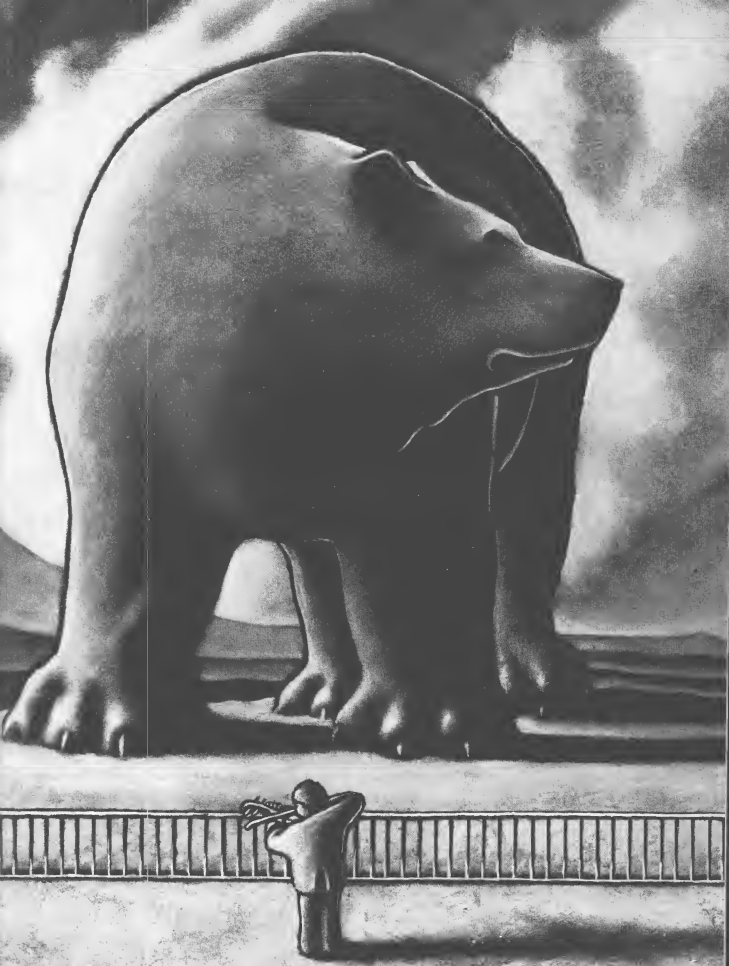
"People can get along in the worst of times," the youthful Director continued politely, "but animals are unable to stand in long lines or take vitamins, or eat the variety of foods we do. This chimp's digestion requires special oils from bananas. Cuban oranges have helped, but they're not quite right. You see his pain. He hasn't had a banana in three months. Of course, we could feed him easily if he were a human being."

The General stepped up to the cage. It seemed that the chimp was watching him with unusual attention.

"What is it?" the Director asked.

The chimp got up and came to





EAGLE

GENERAL JARUZELSKI

the bars. Pain slipped through the General's stomach, and he felt a craving for bananas. Suddenly he was gripping the bars from inside the cage. His muscles ached from the dampness. He peered into his own dark glasses and saw a shadowy chimp face staring back, baring its teeth.

He stumbled back from the bars into the arms of his security man.

"Maciek is in great pain," the Director said as the General steadied himself.

They walked on. People were feeding the elephants, the General noticed as he tried to shake off the delusion he had experienced at the cage. The biscuits, he saw, were the shortbread kind, expensive and hard to come by. These people had stood in long lines to buy them for the elephants. Why had the delusion come upon him? I must be a man of conscience, he told himself. Or I'm losing my mind.

"Even the smallest thing you could do for us," the Director said, "would help us save some of the animals."

"You anticipate deaths?" the General asked, adjusting his glasses.

"Of course, without a doubt."

General Jaruzelski recalled his private meeting with the university professors. They had made him feel guilty and sad, as the young zookeeper was doing more gently. They had not understood, in their inquisitorial fervor, that the Russians would invade their beloved Poland. It was a matter of camouflage, he had told them with tears in his eyes, to make the Soviets think we are like them, for as long as it took for Poles to become free within their own borders. The jealous, fearful bear had to be put to sleep, as the Czechs, Yugoslavs, and Hungarians were doing....

"The Bulgarians sent us some fruit for the animals," the Director was saying. "They didn't even ask for payment in trade, and we're grateful. But, you see, it's got to be the right fruit—bananas for the chimps, raisins and nuts for the birds...."

"Raisins and nuts?" the General asked. The demand was familiar in its seeming extravagance.

The director shrugged shyly. "The grains we're getting are not really for them. Our birds need special kinds of seeds. They develop rashes, lose feathers and coloration when they don't have raisins and nuts. How can I do my job when I have to ignore facts of biology and diet?"

The General nodded and they walked on, followed by the security man. Even Polish animals were extravagant, a Russian would quip, needing exotic feed in keeping with the national character.

"There won't be much I can do," the Director was saying, "when they start to die."

Pain slipped through the General's stomach, and he felt a craving for bananas. Suddenly he was gripping the bars from inside the cage.

It was a matter of doing the effective thing, the General told himself, and not what was popular or satisfying to old scores and hatreds. His own father had died at the hands of the Russians. Surely that personal loss makes me a credible Pole? The blood-bath could start again quickly, no doubt about it. What did they know, those who had never held responsible public office? Their emotional siege was making him hallucinate.

"I would like to call to your attention," the Director said more insistently, "that the problems of our zoos are widely reported in the Western media. American newsmen were here with video equipment, I'm sorry to report. They had the proper permits, of course."

The General felt a moment of respect for the Director. The fellow knew what to say to be heard. A responsible, conscientious young man, not at all like so many corrupt officials.

"Are you a Party member?" the General asked.

The zookeeper smiled. "Unfortunately, no, General. I'm a zoologist,

not political."

They never were, the General thought with a twinge of resentment. Like the animals, they couldn't be political, even though they lived in a political situation. They cared more for their career specialties, even for the animals, than they did for Poland.

The biscuits were sweet, but there was little in them to make the elephant strong. The people who brought them had kind, pitying faces, but they also seemed to know the two-leggeds who hid food in the nearby buildings and seemed to want elephants to perish.

The elephant knew that dying-time was near, and that he would have to do it right here, with no privacy at all.

A face was looking at him. The hands held no biscuits. The eyes were great dark patches. The lips were pressed together.

The General wondered why he had liked zoos so much as a child. What had it been about the animals that had made his boyhood happy? That one might escape? Seeing danger contained? We're surrounded by wild elephants, he thought. One false move and they'll trample us to death. It will be a long time before the danger passes; elephants are big and sturdy, and take a long time to die....

"Can we count on your help, General?" the young Director was saying.

I can't move, the General thought, feeling elephantine.

"I'll do my best," he managed to say finally.

The Director smiled gratefully, endearingly, in contrast to the stone-faced professors when he had spoken the same words to them. Nothing short of futile resistance against the Soviets would satisfy them—not his tears, not his acceptance of their just criticisms of the Party. They had grudgingly admitted his good intentions and personal honesty, but they would never support him in their hearts. They would never love him, but he would do what had to be done to avoid bloodshed.

The universities were also zoos of a kind, where the wiser animals had to teach the more foolish ones how to live and die. A Poland outside the Soviet orbit was impossible, but it was up to Poles whether their relationship with the bear would be that of a slave or equal. Feuding would leave no chance for mutual respect, much less

eventual friendship. Martial law preserved this possibility, despite the loss of economic support from the West.

"Thank you for listening," the Director of the zoo was saying. "I know that your valuable time is limited." The scientist smiled again. He seemed a good sort—probably a country boy educated in the city; polite and without guile. He would not be promoted.

"I'll do what I can for you," the General said, "but put some of the blame on American business. It's inhumane enough even when it's not politically directed." He turned and followed the security man out of the park.

Maciek trembled in the muggy mid-afternoon heat. His stomach rumbled painfully. Someone was angry at him. He felt lost as he listened to the elephants snorting. The birds were silent.

Back in his office the General leaned back in his chair and fell asleep. The animals quarreled with him in a strange language. He couldn't make it out, but it seemed that they were pleading, insisting, mocking. The strongest animals, he said to them, avoided capture; only the weakest were prisoners.

Despair and a sense of worthlessness seized him. The chimp's pain mourned in his stomach. He could not escape by waking.

He longed for what he might do to be loved. Polish independence would do it. With the army behind him, the Russians would think five times before invading. He would equal the great General Pilsudski in driving the Russians out of Poland.

But alas, that feat was impossible. Supplies and ammunition for the army were strictly controlled, and for every line of Poles there was a line of Russian soldiers. Polish independence of any kind would cut East Germany off from its master, precipitating German unification, and all of Eastern Europe would rise in a ferment of hope.

Nothing was simple, ever. Justice was a naive, impractical concept. Even the Americans did not really want a free Poland, because such an interface with the Soviets would only benefit the evil empire's economy. *Cartago Delenda Est!*

He awoke and almost fell out of his chair as his private phone rang.

"Hullo!" he shouted, pressing the receiver to his ear.

"Wojciech! Is that you?" the Soviet Underminister of Agriculture asked.

"Of course." The man knew well enough that no one else could pick up on this line. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, it's the hams again, you see. We need more this month. Special occasion, you see."

"I'll do my best."

"The railroad car will be waiting."

The corrupt bastard, Jaruzelski thought bitterly, recalling the man's weakness for Western pornographic cassettes. If he were one of my officials, I'd have hanged him by now. Andropov had turned a blind eye to him but perhaps Gorbachev would remove the parasite.

"This is very good of you, Wojciech, on such short notice. I won't forget it."

"Not at all, Minister."

"You've had quite a week, I hear."

Jaruzelski got up and went to the window, arranging the long cord carefully behind himself. The Minister had once offered him a cordless model, but he had neglected to take him up on it.

"Wojciech, perhaps I might do something for you? Feel free to ask. I have means. I mean if it's within my power I'll do it. I promise."

Jaruzelski saw a man down in the street, reminding him of Maciek in the way he looped along by the buildings. People resembled animals of one kind or another in their faces and manners. Even human artifacts like buses and cars seemed to be animals on occasion....

"Wojciech!"

General Jaruzelski swallowed hard away from the receiver. The pain from the zoo was still in his stomach.

"What's that, Wojciech!" the Russian shouted as the connection broke up. "I lost you there! What is it you said you want?" There was some coughing and slurping on the line as the Minister downed a shot.

"Minister," the Savior of Poland asked loudly, with a hint of defiance, "can you send some bananas?"

"Bananas, Wojciech?"

"Yes, for the zoos. Animals are dying. The shortages are an embarrassment. CBS did a story on it."

"Did you tape it?"

"No, I only heard about it today. Besides, I don't have a VCR."

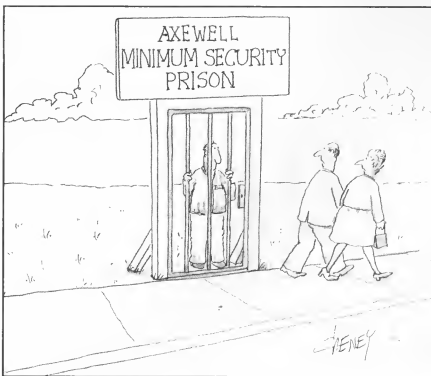
"The Americans are so sentimental about animals! Didn't I offer to get you a Sony?"

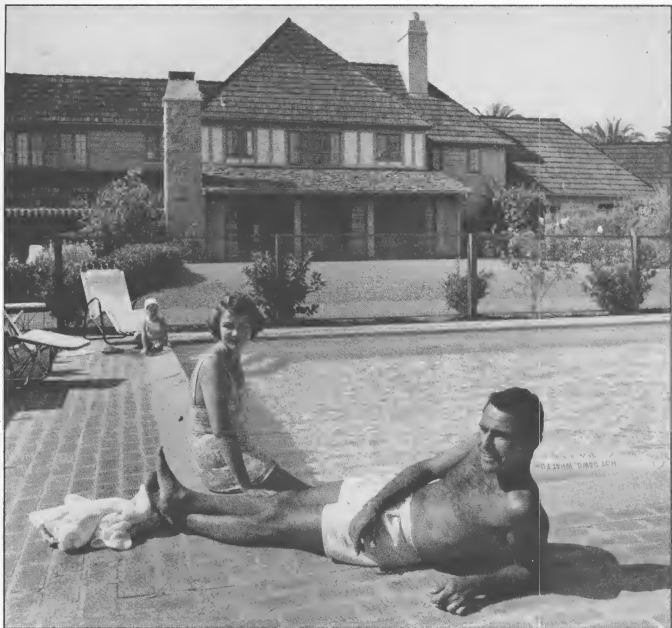
General Jaruzelski was silent.

"I'll see what I can do," the Russian said finally.

"Thank you."

Collaboration and compromise, he thought bitterly as he hung up and sat down again. Cage bars rattled in his ears, and he felt himself slipping again behind Maciek's eyes. His stomach burned as he looked around at his office, at the pale light streaming in through the window, at the locked door with the armed guard sitting outside. The room was a cage. It seemed normal to beg for bananas. ■





The Serlings at the height of Rod's career at their home in Southern California.

LIFE WITH ROD

A Conversation with Carol Serling

by Bob Rosenbaum

COURTESY OF CAROL SERLING

It would be difficult to imagine a Twilight Zone without the genius of Rod Serling. And it's likely Rod would have had far less impact on the television industry without the help and support of Carol Kramer Serling, his wife. Their marriage provided Rod with sufficient motivation to persevere in spite of forty rejection slips in a row, "as he once described it), leave the security of Cincinnati, and head for New York City just in time to assume a pioneering role in the developing TV medium.

Television was lucky to have Serling. Long before the creation of The Twilight Zone, he had participated in the early shaping of TV drama, writing for such landmark programs as the Hallmark Hall of Fame, Studio One, Kraft Television Theater, and Playhouse 90. Rod was one of a handful of gifted young writers to whom the industry turned for direction during its "Golden Age". By 1959, the year The Twilight Zone had its debut, Serling had received three TV Emmys and a Peabody Award—the first ever awarded to a writer.

The rapid transition from struggling playwright to successful producer put pressures on Serling and his family. "He was basically a writer," Carol recalls, "and a writer is a very solitary person who does his best work off by himself. In fact, he was nervous at first about appearing as an on-camera narrator for his own show. But I think he got comfortable with it after a while. He did have a very gregarious side, too."

The Serlings were determined to maintain a normal, healthy home life for themselves and their two daughters, Jody and Ann. All during Serling's most productive years, they kept a second home on Cayuga Lake near Ithaca, far away from the pressure-cooker atmosphere of New York and Hollywood. Each year from the mid-50's onward, the family would shuttle back and forth between coasts, with Rod's heaviest work performed during the mild Southern California winter months, and the summer months reserved for relaxation and recreation in the wooded quiet of upstate New York.

Since Serling's death in 1975, during open-heart surgery at the age of 50, Carol has helped maintain public access to his work and ideas. Her own creative contributions are evident in Stephen Spielberg's Twilight Zone—The Movie, a recent Broadway production of Requiem For a Heavyweight, a documentary on Serling in the works and in this mag-



Rod and Carol working together on a radio broadcast at Antioch College.

azine, among other activities. Carol graciously consented to this interview, in which she offers us some personal perspectives on her life with a remarkable man.

ROSENBAUM: Where did you and Rod first meet?

SERLING: At Antioch College, in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He was one of that large group of returning veterans right after the second World War. It was the fall of '46. I was a freshman. I was seventeen and Rod was twenty-one. We were married two years later, at the end of our second year.

ROSENBAUM: I know at one point you were living in a house trailer. When was that?

SERLING: That was right after the war. We lived in surplus trailers brought up from someplace in Texas, I think. There was no running water; there was kerosene heat and cooking. We had a communal place where everybody washed.

The college put the trailers up—there must have been 20 or 25 of them. But nobody felt sorry for themselves, we were lucky to get them.

ROSENBAUM: Was Rod set on a writing career at that point?

SERLING: Not exactly. He didn't really know where he was going at first. He'd been accepted at Antioch while he was in high school, but the war intervened. He enlisted without graduating—and ended up in the paratroop-

ers, which is another story. When he came back after the war, he took a college work-study job at a rehabilitation hospital near Chicago, because he had been wounded.

ROSENBAUM: Was it something serious?

SERLING: It was with him all his life. He was wounded in the wrist and the knee, but the knee was the serious one. He went through school with additional compensation because of disability. He could have had disability all his life, because the knee was always going out on him. He'd be going down the stairs and all of a sudden it would "snap". I'd hear a bong-bong-bong and I'd think, "Oh, God, he's fallen down the stairs again." But he lived with it.

Actually, his major that first year was Physical Education. After that, he began to get involved in theater, and later, broadcasting.

ROSENBAUM: What happened after graduation?

SERLING: We were graduated in 1950. Rod's first job out of college was at a radio station in Cincinnati. He had worked all over the country in radio during his Antioch college work periods. I think they were generally offering \$45 or \$50 a week. And WLW offered him the princely sum of \$75 a week about two days before graduation.

At WLW Rod was asked to write Geritol ads. [Laughs] With a southern accent and all, making up the



The young couple arriving at the Emmy ceremonies in Los Angeles in 1959.

"After the first success, Rod began to wonder if it was real, if he could ever achieve that level of success again."

testimonials.

But he just up and quit one day, during the winter of 1952, about six months before our first daughter Jody was born—though he was also doing some free-lancing and working on a weekly dramatic show for another Cincinnati station.

ROSENBAUM: Did you help to support the family at that time?

SERLING: Yes, I was working up until Jody was born, and then there was a lot of pressure on Rod to make up the difference. And after a couple of years it just became impossible. Rod's agent said, "You've got to move to New York where the action is."

ROSENBAUM: So you left Cincinnati and moved to Connecticut.

SERLING: Right, in 1954. Our second daughter Nan was born in 1955 in Greenwich. And right about then Rod's career began to take off.

ROSENBAUM: What was that period like for you?

SERLING: It was very exciting. It was really an overnight recognition for him. It started with *Patterns* in 1955. Jack Gould in the *New York Times* gave the program a rave review. We had just moved to the east coast. We went out the night the show aired, and we'd told the babysitter that no one would call because we had just moved to town. And the phone just started ringing and didn't stop for years!

ROSENBAUM: How did you handle that?

SERLING: Listen, at least they learned to spell his name! They used to call him "Sterling" or "Sperling"!

ROSENBAUM: How did Rod deal with it all?

SERLING: Well, in the beginning it happened so quickly that you just didn't stop to think, "What's going on?" After a little while, you know that you hit a high or had a success. Then you start to say "Can I do it again? Maybe I can't reach that pinnacle again." And then you start to doubt yourself. It's cyclical. I think all writers and most people in the arts go through that. There is a high point, and it's damn hard to get there again; and then you start to question your own ability.

I know that Rod went through that for a couple of years, because the problem after the first success was that he would resubmit work that had been turned down and rejected in the past, and all of a sudden it would be bought. He would have been the first to say, "You know, there are some real dogs here." Not everything that he

wrote was that good. So even though there was a lot of his work on TV, he began to wonder if it was real, if he could ever achieve that level of success again.

Fortunately a couple of years later came *Requiem for a Heavyweight*, which received the same kind of public acclaim that *Patterns* had. That was proof that his first success really wasn't just a flash in the pan.

ROSENBAUM: What prompted you to move from Connecticut to California?

SERLING: Again, the business moved. When we first arrived in New York, television was mostly live drama. Starting around 1957 it became more of a film medium, and moved west.

Actually, Rod went to Los Angeles earlier on a series of assignments for MGM. In 1955 we went out for three months while he worked on a screenplay—a terrible little dog called *Saddle the Wind*. And the following year he did the same for a three month period. That was sort of a testing ground for us, to see if we wanted to make the final commitment to move west.

At that time—when we finally did move—our oldest daughter was ready for school, and we decided we couldn't continue the peripatetic life. We had to make a decision. We finally made the move in the fall of 1957.

ROSENBAUM: How did you manage to return each year to Cayuga Lake in Upstate New York?

SERLING: Well the summer place has been in my family forever. I've been spending summers up there forever.

Rod and I spent our honeymoon there, and hardly ever missed a summer. We missed two summers—the summers the girls were born. But otherwise we always went up for July and August, from Ohio originally, then from Connecticut, then later from California.

That was always a very important part of our lives—to spend as much time as possible up there.

ROSENBAUM: That was more or less your recreational time?

SERLING: Well, Rod never stopped writing, no matter where. The only place I can recall that he didn't have a typewriter or a dictaphone was when he was on the boat. And then he was thoroughly relaxed because he knew the telephone was far away and there was nothing he could do about it. But other than that he was always writing.

ROSENBAUM: It was really the only chance to get away from the hustle

COPYRIGHT © CBS 1989

and bustle—

SERLING: Yes, absolutely. He really loved it up there. He felt he just had to get some distance from his work once in a while. And he'd also go back to Binghamton, where he grew up. I think sometimes he had a not-so-totally realistic memory of his childhood in Binghamton. But his memories were idyllic! Oh, he recalled some traumas of adolescence and that sort of thing, but his hometown was a great love. That's why whenever he had an opportunity, he'd go back to Binghamton, and sometimes just drive around on the streets, and kind of relive his boyhood.

ROSENBAUM: At what point did Rod first begin to develop *The Twilight Zone*?

SERLING: I can't remember specifically. I know I was talking to [actor] George Segal in 1985 when we were doing *Requiem* in New York as a play, and he was asking me questions like that, "When did this happen...."

"How did this evolve...." And he said, "You were there, weren't you?" [Laughs] But that was 25 years ago! Who can remember! And I can't say exactly why Rod decided to get involved in a series but I do know that having control—creative control—was the important thing to him, and he realized that he would have that. With *Twilight Zone*, CBS said, "Hey, it's your baby, you go ahead and do what you want with it." And in truth, because it was a fantasy show, through analogy, parable and suggestion, he was able to say and do things that he was not able to do in a straight drama in those days. And so for him it was a happy playground. There was censorship to a certain extent, on words and things like that, but not on ideas and concepts. He could pretty much write what he wanted to.

ROSENBAUM: Rod was a prolific writer. How was he able to write as much—and as well—as he did?

SERLING: I think he was very disciplined. A writer has to be disciplined: other things have to be put aside. He would start working very early. He would get up and grab a cup of coffee and work pretty much all morning. In the beginning he had his typewriter, with his two-finger typing. Then, about the time *Twilight Zone* started, he began dictating. It was kind of fun to listen to him dictate because he acted out all the roles. I wish I'd saved those old dictaphone belts.

But obviously, you have to have the inherent, creative ability and imagination. Rod used to say writing

was the hardest thing in the world. But it was something he *had* to do. Even when he was on vacation, his mind was going. Sometimes, when I'd see him sitting outside in the sun by the lake, I'd say to myself: "Oh, he's not out there working; he can come in and watch the baby for a change!" But of course, when you're a writer, the mind never stops. He'd keep a pad by the bed and jot down thoughts in the middle of the night.

In the *Twilight Zone* days, he really had to come up with that material very quickly. But it came very easily for him. Some of the other dramatic work didn't! Sometimes the things he worked on were very difficult—a difficult pregnancy and horrendous birth.

ROSENBAUM: Where did he work?

SERLING: In the backyard.

ROSENBAUM: In the backyard, literally?

SERLING: Yes, we built an office in the backyard.

ROSENBAUM: What was it like, having a working writer around the house all the time? What sort of father was he?

SERLING: He always threatened to get a little office downtown!

He was—I don't know how to put it, exactly—a liberated male. He never drew those sharp lines of demarcation: This is women's work and this is men's work."

ROSENBAUM: He obviously had a great fondness for children.

SERLING: Yes. He had a great rapport with children. He really did.

ROSENBAUM: He was also a very effective teacher, a very involved teacher, at Antioch and Ithaca and Cornell.

SERLING: At Ithaca he did a week-long seminar in the fall and one in the spring and a couple of other short courses. The kids loved them, because they got a credit for a week-long course. And what did they do? They sat and watched film! Then they had to critique it. But Rod was an easy grader. He hated to fail anyone!

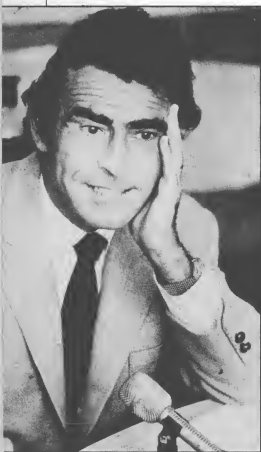
He also did a lot of speaking on college campuses all over the country. He enjoyed the contact with the students.

He had mixed feelings about teaching. He wasn't sure he was offering anything of any great value. He did spend one half of a year back at Antioch College, teaching as a full-time writer in residence. At that time—this was in the '60s—it was a fairly political climate. He felt he was relating better in his evening courses,



The Serling Family: Jody, 6, Nan, 4, Carol and Rod in 1959.

"He was—I don't know how to put this exactly—a liberated male. He never drew those sharp lines of demarcation: 'This is women's work and this is men's work.'"



ROD SERLING MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Rod Serling at Broome Community College in Binghamton, N.Y., shortly before his death.

"He cared very deeply about things. He used to say that the ultimate obscenity is not caring, not doing something about what you feel."

which were adult courses, than he was with the day students. Because he thought the students must be thinking: "What's this Hollywood fat-cat doing here on the campus? What does he really know? He's sold out to the Establishment." He really wanted to teach drama and creative writing. That was where his strengths were and that was where he really belonged.

ROSENBAUM: He was gardening up at the lake at the time he had the heart attack.

SERLING: Pushing the roto-tiller...

ROSENBAUM: He made some sort of remark about that—

SERLING: It was just an inglorious way to have it happen, you know? He said that he'd like to have been on a podium with people hearing him, to go down in that kind of way. And here he was up in the garden pushing the roto-tiller.

ROSENBAUM: When he went into the hospital for open heart surgery, do you think he was scared?

SERLING: I think anybody in that kind of situation, particularly eleven years ago, when the procedure was not as common, would be. But he was willing to take the risk.

ROSENBAUM: He was always a vigorous-looking man with a lot of energy. It's difficult to imagine him slowing down. His dad died at about the same age, didn't he?

SERLING: Rod's father died at the age of 52. The whole family had a history of heart complications and heart problems, most of the men in the family died around that age. So I think Rod always felt this was hanging over his head—I know he did.

ROSENBAUM: Rod's death must have been very difficult for you—and the children—because there wasn't much preparation...

SERLING: Well, that summer we were all together. And I guess we sort of pulled the curtains and took care of each other. We were all supportive of each other. We needed that. We were a very close group. And for those summer months we just sort of lived with it, lived through it.

ROSENBAUM: You seem to be very much involved with Rod's legacy these days. It seems like a full-time job.

SERLING: In a sense it is. It's not that I'm a keeper of the flame. But it has kept me busy. *The Twilight Zone* has turned into a business. I think Rod would be absolutely amazed that the interest is still there and that so many people remember his work. There are times when I think it's time for me to get out of the *Twilight Zone*! And I

think, "Well, this will end next week, or next month or next year..." and then something else comes up.

We're talking about doing a documentary on Rod. There are some very good people that are interested in doing it; it's just a matter of getting the clearances. It may happen yet.

ROSENBAUM: *The Twilight Zone* was filled with references to the strange, the unseen, and the unexplained. Did Rod believe in any of that?

SERLING: He really *wanted* to believe in the supernatural—ESP, visitations from outer space. Things like that. The lines in Peru at Nazca. He wanted to believe it was an airfield laid down long ago by visitors from out there. It was a willing suspension of disbelief. He wanted to believe in ESP studies that were going on at Duke University and various other places. But he had no direct experiences of his own and so he remained skeptical.

He could be scared at night in a graveyard, but he was fascinated by it at the same time. Long before *The Twilight Zone* his favorite reading material late at night would be short ghost stories or Lovecraft or Poe or James. But he was pretty even keeled. I mean, people must have thought he was kind of a far out guy and kind of nuts, but he wasn't. He really wasn't.

ROSENBAUM: All his life Rod was a man passionately devoted to justice. He spent a lot of his time fighting the network, the censors. It must have been hard in those later years to see the country tearing itself apart. It must have been demoralizing for a writer so optimistic about the human spirit.

SERLING: You couldn't be more right. He used to say the ultimate obscenity is not caring, not doing something about what you feel, not *feeling*! Just drawing back and drawing in; becoming narcissistic.

I remember when he was in the hospital after his heart attack, and the whole Watergate thing was going on. I used to have to turn the television off, because he was getting so upset! He was so angry at what was happening in Washington, and the fact that so many people didn't seem to be concerned.

He cared very deeply about things and felt that it was—it sounds pretentious—it was our responsibility to do something about it. I don't know how he'd feel about the current scene now, but he'd probably be out on some soap box somewhere. ■

SPECIAL COLOR FEATURE

VOODOO

MYTH AND REALITY



ANGEL HEART

*An exclusive
preview of a
fantastic new
motion picture.*

MAGIC IN THE STREETS

*A special report
on America's
fastest-growing
religion.*

ANGEL HEART

The strange story behind Alan Parker's new film—a hardboiled urban thriller of voodoo, witchcraft and murder

by James Verniere



Imagine if you will a novel about devil worship written by Raymond Chandler, and you have some idea of the style and substance of William Hjortsberg's *Falling Angel*. First published in hardcover in 1978 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, the novel, which is set in New York City in 1959, is an offbeat urban thriller that weaves voodoo, witchcraft, murder, and metempsychosis into a diabolical tapestry that is startlingly original.

The novel tells the story of Harry Angel, a world-weary private detective hired (on Friday the 13th) by a sinister foreigner named Louis Cyphre. Angel's task is to track down a missing person named Johnny Favorite, a '40s crooner who reneged on a deal and is rumored to have died or suffered a disfiguring head wound during the war. Cyphre doesn't believe it. He wants retribution, and it's Harry Angel's job to get it for him.

Angel, the sole employee of the

Crossroads Detective Agency, is an archetypal private eye. A hybrid of Mike Hammer, Phillip Marlowe, and Dashiell Hammett's Continental Op, Harry Angel swills bourbon, chain-smokes, drives a beat-up Chevy, and seems perfectly adapted to the novel's low-life atmospherics: an urban underworld of gin mills, flophouses, Harlem "herb shops," and carnival sideshows.

During the course of Angel's search he encounters an aging debutante nicknamed the Witch of Wellesley, a fortune-teller named Madame Zora, and Epiphany Proudfoot, a beautiful mulatto girl who happens to be a voodoo mambo (high priestess). It's a weird quest that takes him from a VA Hospital in New Hampshire to a voodoo death ceremony in Central Park to a *misa niger* held in an abandoned Manhattan subway station. And the trail he follows is littered with dream visions, riddles, and conundrums, climaxing in the most hor-

rifying confrontation of Harry Angel's career.

Although it was favorably reviewed at the time of its release and nominated for an award by the Mystery Writers of America, the novel has—surprisingly—been out of print for several years. Now a film adaptation written and directed by British filmmaker Alan Parker, who also directed *Midnight Express*, *Shoot the Moon*, *Pink Floyd—The Wall*, and *Birdy*, is scheduled for release this spring from Tri-Star Pictures. The film stars Mickey Rourke (9½ Weeks) as private eye Harry Angel, and Robert De Niro (*Raging Bull*, *The Mission*) as the mysterious Louis Cyphre. Also featured in the film's cast are eighteen-year-old Lisa Bonet from television's *Cosby Show* as Epiphany Proudfoot, the Obeah priestess who may hold the key to the awful secret of Johnny Favorite, and Charlotte Rampling as the witchy heirress, Margaret Kruse-



WHERE ANGELS FEAR TO TREAD: Director Alon Porker (Birdy, Pink Floyd—The Woll), explores the dark underworld of voodoo magic in his new film adopted from William Hjortsberg's novel *Falling Angel*. The film features rising star Mickey Rourke (seen with Alon Porker on facing page right) as gumshoe Harry Angel, and costars Charlotte Rampling as on helless known as the Witch of Wellesley, and eighteen-year-old Liso Bonet of TV's *Cosby* Show as voodoo priestess Epiphany Proudfoot.

mark. A paperback re-issue of the novel will be available this December from Warner Books.

Why has it taken so long for a genre novel as uniquely entertaining and "adaptable" as *Falling Angel* to come together on film? According to William Hjortsberg (who recently wrote the original screenplay for Ridley Scott's *Legend*), the answer has a lot to do with the book's run of bad luck (which Hjortsberg refers to as "a labyrinth of betrayal")—a history of misfortune as persistent as a voodoo curse. Originally published in a fifteen thousand-copy run, *Falling Angel* was sold out of bookstores (thanks to its favorable reviews) in a couple of months in 1978. But by the time the second printing—which was delayed—hit the stands, the book had lost its head of steam. A paperback edition did become available, but not until two years later, by which time the good reviews were a faded

memory.

"If I had been quicker on my feet, I would own the rights to the book," says Hjortsberg, whose other novels include *Alp*, *Gray Matters*, and *Symbiography*. In a telephone conversation from his home in Montana he recalled "It was out of print, and when I served the publisher notice that I wanted the rights back, they said they had a new licensing agreement with Warner Books. That was over a year ago. I just got screwed right down the line on this one."

Born in Manhattan in 1941, William Reinhold Hjortsberg wrote an early version of the novel in the form of a five-page short story while he was a student at McBurney's, an exclusive New York prep school (J.D. Salinger is also an alumnus). Titled "To Hell in a Handbasket," the story was written in the form of a fable. "It contained the basic plot, and I won a little fiction prize at school for it."

Years later, in 1976, Hjortsberg was inspired by his friend, novelist Thomas McGuane, who was writing very profitably for the film industry, to resurrect "To Hell in a Handbasket." His intention at the time was to turn the story directly into a screenplay. "I had written a couple of scripts for Roger Corman by then," says Hjortsberg in reference to screenplays for the films *Thunder and Lightning* (1977) and *Georgia Peaches* (1980). "But when I told Tom the story, he said, 'Don't waste that on a movie. Do it as a book.'" A National Endowment grant followed allowing Hjortsberg to "re-read all of Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Ross MacDonald, and even Mickey Spillane" before focussing on his novel (which was initially published in condensed form in *Playboy* magazine).

According to Hjortsberg, the novel's voodoo subtext—the most

(continued on page 57)



MAGIC IN THE STREETS

The bizarre and often shocking truth behind the dark legends of voodoo

by Robert Simpson

There were no drums, no drumbeats the day the White Tiger died. Nearly every story about voodoo, whether true or false, begins with drums. Drums that freeze the Great White Hunter in his tracks and hold more danger once they stop than when you first hear them. It makes for good reading. But though there were no drums beating that chill November day, it's clear that voodoo was involved.

It was, in some ways, the perfect tabloid crime. It's the story of a man named Nicholas Diaz, godfather to TV star Erik (Chips) Estrada. It's said that Diaz was well-known in the community as a *houngan* (or *oungan*)—a priest of *santeria*, a Hispanic voodoo religion. For some time, Diaz's

neighbors on Manhattan's West Side had to cope with strange late-night visitors, apparent drug-dealing, odd animal noises, and bizarre smells which crept out of the fifty-eight-year-old man's ground-level apartment. They'd come to accept it, as they did all his peculiar habits. They even nicknamed him "The White Tiger," after his almost pathological fixation on wearing white all the time.

But November seventh was different. A new smell had been mounting in the halls for the last few days, and it had finally gotten to the point where action had to be taken. Diaz hadn't been seen for some time, so the police were called. They entered the dimly lit apartment. The fetid stench, heavier than in the hallway, was

nothing to what they encountered inside. In the living room they found several makeshift sacrificial altars, caked with blood and bird feathers, with live chickens strutting about as if they owned the place. Some say there were even human remains scattered about. The true horror of the whole scene was in the bedroom, however, where Diaz, his body riddled with knife wounds, lay face down in a pool of blood. A chicken pecked around the corpse, like a confused pet, oblivious to how close it came to joining its fellows on the floor outside.

Voodoo was also present at the last game of the 1986 World Series, when a self-proclaimed voodoo priestess, or *mambo*, gave her blessing to the New York Mets. They did win, so

they probably didn't mind her being there. And considering all the miraculous comebacks the team pulled off during the Series, who's to say that she had no effect?

These two events took place only a few short weeks apart, but they clearly demonstrate the two extremes of voodoo. One was fairly harmless, even comic. The other cost a man his life. They are two manifestations of a group of religions which are all gathered under the name voodoo. It's crucial to remember that what we are talking about is a *system* of closely-related religions, not just one.

Voodoo. The term is a Creole form of the word *vodun*, which comes from the Fon language of the West-African people of Benin and Nigeria, and means simply "spirit." The religion can be traced to the seventeenth century—the early days of the trans-Atlantic slave trade—and from the beginning it was a faith that grew and changed with each culture it encountered. It remains today one of the world's most flexible beliefs, but does possess some fundamental tenets. Taking from Africa and Haiti its basic creation myth, *Vodun* holds that, following the creation of the universe by *Gran Met*, the governing of affairs on Earth was turned over to the *loa*.

The *loa* are the voodoo pantheon, spirits and deities which control the primal forces of nature and human behavior. A few of the Haitian deities include: *Legba* or *Papa Legba*, the spirit of communication (most tales of voodoo ceremonies state that Papa Legba is always invoked first, for without his presence there is every chance the rest of the *loa*, over whom he holds sway, may not listen); *Ezili Freda*, the spirit of love; *Dambala Wedo* (the snake god, who inhabits waterfalls) and his wife *Aida Wedo*, the spirit of rainbows; *Baron Samedi*, lord of cemeteries; *Pizuzu*, lord of guile; *Zaka Mede*, patron of agriculture; and *Ougou Feray*, the African god of war, who stands high in the voodoo pantheon.

Voodoo beliefs grew and were refined as they shifted from country to country by ship. For this reason the religions are understandably different in many Caribbean countries. Once the seed was planted, the belief changed to suit the region. That's why Haitian voodoo, the most widespread form, is so different from *santeria*, a product of the Yoruba people of Nigeria who were forced to accept Catholicism as their religion on arrival as slaves in

Cuba. The more I dug, the more I discovered how much Haitian voodoo also differed from *macumba*, the Brazilian version, from Trinidadian *shango*, and from the voodoo of the United States. Regardless of their particular belief, however, each sect calls their faith simply "The Religion." To its believers, voodoo is as legitimate a religion as Christianity, or Judaism.

The influence of the Roman Catholic Church on the shaping of voodoo was a strong one. As the Church imposed itself as the sole religion of the slaves, the slaves in turn held on to their gods by identifying them with the images of various

*In the living
room the police
found several
sacrificial
altars caked with
blood and bird
feathers. In the
bedroom, Diaz lay
face down in a
pool of blood.*

Catholic saints. Two examples of this are *Ezili Freda*, (who is equated with The Virgin of Miracles, Our Lady of Mount Carmel), and Saint Patrick, who becomes *Damballah*, lord of fertility. This way they could continue to worship their gods and not upset their masters.

Though the Catholic Church has little love for voodoo, in some Caribbean villages marriages, homes, and even children are blessed by the ranking Catholic priest and the local *houngan* or *mambo*, the priests often standing side by side. And for all the blood and death and casting of spells on others (called "working roots") associated with the religions, they do serve a real purpose as a faith. In certain places, voodoo and the invoking of the *loa* are used regularly to help combat diseases like cancer and leprosy, and conditions like epilepsy. While no cures or drastic improvements have been documented in the Western world as to the religion's effect on such illnesses, they are no more outlandish than praying to Saint Jude, patron of lost causes. And they provide comfort to the families. They

believe, and that's half religion's power.

Voodoo has been a repressed religion throughout its history, and because of that repression there is among believers a desperate desire that it remain a secret religion. This need for secrecy breeds in voodoo's believers a depth of conviction like that of the Roman Empire's Christian slaves or of Spain's Jewish *moros*, who survived the Spanish Inquisition by taking their faith into hiding. And, like the *moros*, *Papa Legba's* faithful maintain secrecy even in circumstances that would permit them to worship openly if they wished it—as is the case, for instance, in New York City, where voodoo flourishes in secret.

Outside of America, in countries like Haiti where there are no laws separating church and state, the power of voodoo can reach as high as the presidency. In 1957, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, a physician and student of voodoo, had himself elected president—and was later installed as President-for-Life in 1964—and went on to carry out one of the bloodiest reigns in Haitian history (a tradition carried after his death by his son, Jean-Claude—"Baby Doc"). Many believed the Duvaliers to be *houngans*, and their elite paramilitary force, the *Tontons Macoutes*, to have been voodoo priests. (The term comes from the French Creole words *tonton*, which means "uncle" and *macoute*, which stands for "bagman" or "boogeyman." It came from the fact that most people who were taken away by the *Tontons* were never seen again.)

Following Baby Doc's overthrow, the streets were littered with the bodies of the *Tontons*, slain in the manner Haitians feel one must kill a *loup-garou*, or werewolf: by hacking the body into several pieces, and burning each piece separately (for fear the *loup-garou* might pull himself back together and attack the people who killed him.)

Many practitioners of voodoo were also attacked following Duvalier's ouster: five villagers were slain and their homes burned under the assumption that a woman in the group had caused a boy of seven to die, not from a disease but by some poison she kept in her possession. More than one hundred deaths of supposed voodoo practitioners took place in the months following. Herald Simon, one of Haiti's most prominent *houngans*, claimed in a *Washington Post* article last year that Christian clergy were inciting the young people to riot against

them in a "well-arranged strategy" to weaken voodoo's hold in the country. Many Catholic and Christian leaders look on it as magic and demon-worship. "Even though voodoo is going through a bad time," said Max Paul, a German-trained anthropologist, "the hope now is that believers can come out of it by drawing together to organize."

Although voodoo and *santeria* are prevalent in the rural areas of Central and South America, their greatest growth in recent years has been in large American cities.

Statistics from 1979 put the number of believers in *santeria* in New York alone in the hundreds of thousands, a number that has no doubt grown since. Especially when you take into account that it was about five years ago that a mass exodus from Cuba, Haiti and other countries began (In 1979, two hundred thousand Haitians, two hundred fifty thousand Dominicans, and ninety thousand Cubans officially called New York their home). In this, a modern dispersion of voodoo could be said to be taking place, much as in the seventeenth century when the religion spread from Africa throughout the Caribbean. Voodoo has found new homes in cities such as Chicago, Miami, New Orleans; wherever a boat can dock or a plane can land.

As their population here has risen, so has the incidence of illegal voodoo ceremonies, but in almost every instance the police refuse to admit that the killings—dead animals and scorched earth found in graveyards throughout the country—may be the result of voodoo. (In 1983 a jogger, in full sweatsuit, was found beaten to death in New York's Prospect Park, where many voodoo practices are said to take place. The corpse's mouth was sewn shut. The official status of that particular case, as far as the officers of the 61st Precinct are concerned, is "unsolved.") The background of the practitioners is different now, too; they include the young, the old, and every race you can think of. Still, many of the ins and outs of the religions have stayed secret.

It is that secrecy that has spawned so much of the superstition and just plain silliness that surrounds the religion. Tales (whether based in fantasy or fact) of people flying through the air, returning from the dead, being possessed by loa (or to use the terminology, "ridden like a horse"), do little to dignify the belief as a true

religion. There is one aspect, though, that is beginning to be taken more seriously: the matter of the zombie.

Zombies. They've become one of the enduring cliché of modern horror. Slack-faced, shambling monsters, driven by those omnipresent drums, relentlessly pursuing beautiful women to slake their hunger for flesh—or worse. Filmmaker George Romero built his name and reputation on these strange creatures. (A digression: In all the research I've done, nowhere is it mentioned that zombies need human flesh to survive, or that they even enjoy eating it. In fact,

Someone is made into a zombie as punishment for some misdeed. However, one particular form of zombie called a duppy is created for pure vengeance.

since most zombies have their mouths sewn shut—to prevent them from telling any secrets once they reach the afterworld—the idea of cannibalistic undead seems preposterous. But that's the fantasy.)

There are some, however, who are willing to spend years of their lives in the jungles looking for scientific proof for the stories.

Dr. Wade Davis, ethnobotanist and self-styled "Indiana Jones," returned from a year in Haiti in 1983 with the makings of his book *The Serpent and the Rainbow* in his suitcase, and with several sacks of the substances he believes are used to create real live—or undead—zombies. A combination of tetrodotoxin, a highly poisonous secretion from the glands of the puffer fish, and several hallucinogenic plants, said Davis, is the secret. Incorrectly prepared puffer fish is the cause of many deaths each year in Japan, where the dish is considered a delicacy. In small amounts, however, the tetrodotoxin acts on the nerves, and produces a state of near-death, from which the user revives a short time later.

It is this effect, says Davis, that is desired by voodoo priests. The exact combination of chemicals, and the substance that is used to revive zombies and keep them docile, are still unknown, but Davis's discoveries are already being looked into. Doctors someday hope to use the substances he returned with in the hospital, much the way curare is used in anesthesia.

Serious voodoo practitioners, however, say Davis has it all wrong. Someone is made into a zombie, they say, as punishment for some misdeed, and results in the person being made to take over the duties of the one he has wronged. (There is one particular form of zombie, called a *duppy*, that is created for pure vengeance. The *duppy* is usually a member of the family who has passed away and is summoned by standing over his grave and calling his name repeatedly.) For practitioners, being made into a zombie is no more evil than, say, excommunication is to a Catholic.

In the months since the death of the "White Tiger" no culprit has been found; no one has been brought to justice. The veil of secrecy surrounding *santeria* has protected its own.

The Mets went on to win the World Series. One well-known player on the team reportedly credits a voodoo charm with helping him make winning runs.

In the course of working on this article my own life has been turned upside down. I've experienced a series of reverses and upsets: a lingering bug I haven't been able to shake, problems with my love-life, and a computer malfunction that nearly caused me to miss my deadline. It's almost as if someone or something didn't want me to finish the piece. Some might say there was something supernatural about it all. I wouldn't have agreed with them when I first began researching this article, but now—I'm not so sure.

Beliefs have power of their own—especially beliefs with a history and tradition. If there is any truth behind those myths of beating drums and shambling undead, it seems to me it's this: Whatever power the gods may have over our lives, true good or evil comes from within ourselves, and the acts we carry out every day. Voodoo, like all other faiths, is just a focus, a mirror for what lies within us.

Special thanks to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for their invaluable assistance with this article.

ANGEL HEART

(continued from page 53)

striking element in the book—was inspired by a story he'd read in *The Village Voice* about goat heads and dismembered chickens being left behind in Central Park by present-day voodoo practitioners. "Later, I went to Haiti and researched the subject more extensively. I actually paid for a couple of ceremonies, by which I mean I paid the drummers and bought all the rum." He also used some details he found a book on voodoo entitled *Divine Horseman*, written by a woman who lived in Haiti in the '30s.

The final hardcover may have disappeared prematurely from the bookstores. But it did make an impression in Hollywood. It was first optioned for Paramount Pictures by film producer Robert Evans (*Chinatown*, *Marathon Man*), who lined up John Frankenheimer (*Black Sunday*, *52 Pick-Up*) to direct. "But it never went beyond a first draft, which I wrote," says Hjortsberg. A few years later, Robert Redford optioned the rights (Hjortsberg did another series of drafts of the screenplay for Redford). And later, film director Brian DePalma showed interest in the project.

Ultimately, the novel ended up in the hands of Alan Parker, who wrote his own screenplay. "But I gladly agreed to let Parker write his own version, which I've read and which is terrific. But it is clearly his version. Although it retains the spirit and the plot of my book, he wrote it with a director's eye for contracts and locations."

Parker kept the story's 1950's setting. "There was some talk about updating it, but thank God that never happened. The only thing I do object to," says Hjortsberg "is the title change. But I think I understand why it was done. There have been a couple of films called *Faller: Angel*, and I think that in some way Parker wanted to put his own stamp on the final product. That may just be my bruised ego speaking. But knowing Alan Parker's work I suspect the movie will be very, very good."

In fact, Alan Parker says that he was sent a copy of *Falling Angel* when it was first published. But he did not

seriously consider a film adaptation until Robert Redford relinquished the rights. After being stung by criticism he received for the changes he made in his film adaptation of William Wharton's *Birdy*, Parker was gratified to hear Hjortsberg's remarks about the *Angel Heart* screenplay. He is nonetheless anxious to distance his film adaptation from the novel, and the title change was part of that strategy.

"I have very eclectic tastes," Parker says. "And I've always tried to make films that are different from one another. This film gave me the chance to work in the Chanderesque detective story and yet take it into another



area." Parker also wanted to give the film an added edge, which is why he re-staged half the action in and around New Orleans, a setting he uses to evoke the theme of voodoo and devilship in twentieth century America.

The product of a "social-agnostic" background, Alan Parker professes to have no previous interest in the occult or in occult fiction. But in the course of his research for *Angel Heart*, he often experienced *deja-vu*. "It was as if I had encountered these ideas and images before," says Parker, whose best films—*Midnight Express* (1978), *Pink Floyd—The Wall* (1982), and *Shoot the Moon* (1982)—contain some of modern film's most striking visualizations of isolation, alienation, and despair. "I have been reminded, most recently by my focus puller on *Angel Heart*, that I often use the image of a cross in my films, and it's true, such imagery appears in *The Wall* and *Birdy* and again in *Angel Heart* (which contains considerable religious imagery). But I can't tell you why that is so, only that it is. Unlike Ken Russell, who has a Jesuit School background, I was raised in the Church of England,

a religion that I can tell you absolutely nothing about."

Although Parker's screenplay retains some of the novel's dream imagery, he says that the occult elements in the film—the voodoo ceremonies, for example—are presented as realistically as possible. "There won't be any flickering dissolves used to introduce the occult in the film. I think the best way to get an audience involved in a subject like that is to present it as realistically as possible." The hardboiled detective fiction imagery will also be retained in as realistic a form as possible, and Parker anticipates an R-rating for his film.

Surely, the most difficult part of making a film like *Angel Heart* is the casting, and Parker admits that—like many of us—he casts a book or a script in his mind as he's reading it. In the case of *Falling Angel/Angel Heart*, he thought of three separate actors for the role of Harry Angel: Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, and Mickey Rourke. In the end, he contacted De Niro first, who turned the part down but showed interest in playing the diabolical Louis Cyphre. "I was surprised by that since he has a preference for strict realism. The character he plays in the film is larger than life. He almost reads as a caricature. The difference between this and what De Niro did before is that when he played Jake LaMotta he could get inside that man. This part is not like that. There was no way to get inside," says Parker, adding that he does not want to reveal too much about Louis Cyphre before the film's release.

Although there were no "technical consultants" to help stage the film's voodoo ceremonies, Parker did find that many of the New Orleans extras had a knowledge of the subject that surprised him. "We had a lot of people working in the film who could have been technical advisers. Voodoo is alive today. But the people who practice it are not very different in my view from those who practice other religions."

When asked to sum up the theme of the film, Parker hesitates. The plot is after all full of artful and elaborate twists that he doesn't want to reveal unwittingly. "In the end," he says, "we're asking people to believe that there is such a thing as the devil and that a man might sell his soul. I suppose that even if you don't believe literally in the possibility of that, almost everyone believes in the idea that it can and has been done." ■





AT THE RUMMAGE S A L E

*There was nobody fit to lead the PTA
—nobody alive that is*

by Vicki Grove

ILLUSTRATION BY RANDY JONES

He — She? It came in the back door of the gymnasium while Jackie and Mary Alice and I were handling the marking table. It was wearing something black and flowing, something out of style enough that I hated to look at it too directly, didn't want to make it think I had noticed. I wanted to nudge Mary Alice and tell her to get a load of that, but she's the kind that gets carried away and laughs out loud and then you're embarrassed to death and wish you'd never opened your mouth. So I just watched it out of the corner of my eye. It didn't walk. It *glided* over to us.

"Books, toys, or clothes?" asked Jackie.

It had deposited a grocery bag on our table, and was already gliding away from us.

"Excuse me, is this clothes?" Jackie called again after it.

I glanced down and noticed a green slime on the sides of the sack, in the vague shape of handprints. Mary Alice noticed too and raised her

eyebrows.

"If it is, I hope they're washable," she muttered.

I gingerly opened the bag, which I would have sworn was beginning to sizzle around the edges.

"It's just books," I said.

"Any romances?" Jackie dumped the contents on the table, then threw the sack on the floor. I was wearing my old Nikes so I stomped out the spreading flames.

We all three looked down at the fire at the same time, then up at the door. But it was gone. It had passed the table of potted plants on its way out, and they now all lay wilted and dead. All except for the mother-in-law's tongue. Nothing can kill that stuff.

"Huh," said Mary Alice. "I didn't even get a chance to ask if it wanted a tax receipt."

Jackie was in luck. All the books but one were romances — two Victoria Holts and three Danielle Steels. The third book was called *Incantations and Black*

RUMMAGE S A L E

Charms for the Bidding Forth of the Undead and Once Dead.

"Any of you guys want that one?" I asked. It was late afternoon now and we were divvying up the stuff that hadn't sold.

"Nah," said Mary Alice. "I'd rather take the mother-in-law's tongue and the Vegemetic."

"I've got the romances," said Jackie. She'd stuck them under the table when they first came in. "I want to read those before I start on anything else."

"Guess I'll take it then," I said, absently-mindedly stuffing it into my gym bag. "You never know when a book like this will come in handy."

Altogether we made about seven hundred dollars for the school's band uniform fund that day at the rummage sale.

When I got home I threw my gym bag in the closet and forgot about it. When I got it out and unzipped it a couple of weeks later, a dozen or so hairy black spiders scrambled out and went skittering across the floor.

"Now that's strange," I thought. "How could anything survive with my gym socks for that long?"

To tell the truth, I'd forgotten about the book until I emptied out my bag that afternoon. I sat down then and sort of skimmed through the first fifty or so pages while I watched *As the World Turns*, then crammed it way in the back of my recipe drawer. I didn't want the kids finding it and reading it. I mean, black magic and necromancy are all very well and good, but for all I knew there might have been something sexually explicit in the part of the book I hadn't gotten to yet.

Again, I forgot about the book, though sometimes when I'd come to the kitchen for a bologna sandwich at midnight I'd notice an odd fluorescent glow coming from my recipe drawer. I figured it was some weird kind of mold. In my kitchen, you never want to pry too deeply or ask too many questions.

And then, in late August, I got appointed to the PTA nominating committee for the next school year. It

was our job to find new officers.

"This is the pits," I thought. "The very pits."

Nobody wants to be on the PTA nominating committee, or any nominating committee for that matter, because it's easier to get your kids to quit eating on the couch than it is to find anybody in our town willing to be president of anything.

It's not that hard to understand. I mean, after all, all of us have jobs now, all of us have our time sewn up trying to hold things together at the office and at home. Ever since the superwoman thing set in and we all got liberated, nobody has time to be

*One of Billy's
baby lizards
shuffled by. At
once, Della was
on all fours on
the floor,
greedily ripping
the lizard apart
and chomping it
down.*

president of anything, let alone anything as time-consuming as the PTA.

And so if you're one of the poor slob on the nominating committee you make phone call after phone call, and you twist arm after arm, and you try to call in favors, make threats, promise people your children, whatever you can think of.

"Well, that's the last person on the membership list," I wheezed, hanging up the phone and collapsing. "All 297 called and pressured and humiliated, and not one taker."

We'd been at it four days now, Jackie and Theresa and Pam and I. Pam's kitchen table was littered with the pathetic debris of your typical nominating committee—empty cola cans, not all of them even diet. Crusty bean dip containers, hastily scribbled blackmail ideas.

"Well," said Jackie, looking haggard and fiddling with a potato chip. "What about that book of yours, Jessie? The one from the rummage sale."

I sighed.

"Oh, Jackie, I admit that I thought of that too. But I don't know. Do we real-

ly want a zombie for PTA president?"

Everybody just sat for a minute, looking jaded.

"Better than nothing," Theresa said then.

And so, the four of us gathered at Memorial Cemetery at midnight on the autumnal equinox, just as the book instructed. We'd talked about it before hand, and agreed that Mrs. Della Havinswood was the gal we wanted. Della had been dead about fifteen, maybe twenty, years. But all four of us remembered her with awe from when we were young girls.

She was an organizer, one of those stout ladies with flowered-print dresses and black low-heeled shoes that really know how to get in there and keep things humming. I could remember her leading the Brownie troop, the Board of Education, the Garden Club. She was everywhere, keeping the whole show on the road. With her, we'd be able to really lie back and relax.

"Ready?" Jackie asked when the four of us were standing on the four corners of Della's grave, chicken blood smeared on our faces (the book said lamb's blood, but none of us had lamb in her freezer, and we figured who was going to check that close?) and spider web and nightshade tangled in our hair.

Jackie began to read from the book, and we all chanted when we were supposed to. You may be thinking that we probably felt kind of apprehensive. But bear in mind that we were all mothers, and mothers know they've seen everything.

"... and from the legions that guard the portals I summon thee to step forth, through the dimensions, past the barriers ..."

"... past the barriers ..." we chanted.

About then the ground beneath our feet began to shake, but it was the smell of putrid meat that really got our attention.

"For some reason, I hadn't really counted on that," Pam whispered to me.

And then, Della was among us.

I would have to say that make-up was our biggest challenge. I mean, hair was relatively easy. She still had most of hers, and in fact it had grown much longer in her grave. And so had her nails. They were right in style.

But skin was another thing.

Luckily, Theresa is a Perfection Cosmetics saleswoman, and she knew just what Della needed to get back

into the swing of things. She concentrated on hands and face, and we figured we could scrounge together a wardrobe for Della which would pretty much cover everywhere else.

"This cosmetic putty will do wonders for her. I can build her right back up," said Theresa, her eyes glinting with the challenge.

It was nearly dawn when Theresa finished, and she looked exhausted. But Della looked like a new ... well ... woman. Sort of.

We decided the best place for Della to stay would be in my basement, at least for the time being. None of my family goes down there much since Billy's iguana colony slipped from their cage while he had them down there feeding them. And Della seemed right at home when we took her down to show her around. With one swipe of her arm she cleared away seven or eight detergent boxes, an old car battery, and four bushel baskets full of other junk and spread out for a nap on the laundry table.

"What about food?" whispered Theresa as we stood watching Della doze. "I know the book said she'd sleep during the day, but when she wakes this evening won't she be starved? We don't want to take her to the meeting ravenous."

In the swimmie basement light the putty Theresa had used looked orangey on Della's hands, and I could see the bare bone shining at her wrists, under the long polyester sleeves of the pantsuit we'd found her. Something from the book crossed my mind, a phrase I had glanced at quickly but not really concentrated on. Something about the undead craving flesh and warm blood....

"I don't know, you guys," I suggested. "Why don't we wait till she wakes up and ask her about food. Some people are pretty picky about what they like to eat, you know."

But Della couldn't tell us what she liked to eat because it turned out Della couldn't talk. When we had first raised her, we thought she wasn't talking because she was shy around strangers. But this second night when we went down at twilight and found her sitting on the edge of the laundry table, waiting patiently, it became obvious to us that she couldn't speak. No woman, dead or not, stays silent for that long on purpose.

"Oh, well," Jackie shrugged, "speech isn't a requirement for the PTA presidency, is it?"

"No, actually it will work out

rather nicely this way," said Theresa, patting one of Della's sagging cheeks gently back up toward her eye socket. "We need a president to do the work, but there are lots of people willing to do the talking."

We decided to offer Della a chef salad with Italian dressing and a cup of tea. But she just stared at them, sitting stiff and disheveled on the edge of her table.

"Della," said Pam, reaching out for Della's hand and then thinking twice about it, "we're going to be taking you as our guest visitor to the PTA meeting in a little while. Won't that be fun?"



Della still stared at the salad, white bone showing where her pants had hiked up a little above the ankles. Out of the corner of my eye I saw one of Billy's baby lizards shuffle out from under the water heater.

"Della! Stop, you'll ruin the crease in your slacks!" yelled Jackie, but it was too late. Della was on all fours on the floor, greedily ripping the lizard apart and chomping him down. A trickle of blood oozed down her chin, eating into her make-up.

"Oh, well," sighed Pam. "At least she's wearing polyester, and it's washable, with a good presoak, of course."

"Of course," I assured her.

Two hours later we had changed Della's clothes, gotten her to the PTA meeting, introduced her to the other members, and even announced her as the nominating committee's choice for our next president.

"Is your friend anorexic?" asked Mary Lou Carnheimer, leaning across three people to whisper to me in a loud voice.

"Of course not. She just works out a lot. Jane Fonda's Advanced."

Mary Lou leaned back nodding, her eyebrows raised sky high, clearly impressed.

"Still, I wouldn't be caught dead with a hairstyle like hers," Fran Starkmeyer huffed from my other side.

Nevertheless, the membership voted gratefully and unanimously to make her president.

Della turned out to be a very good president. Evidently the grooves worn into her brain during years of committee and club work while she was alive were among the only things about her that hadn't yet decayed.

There were teeny little problems. It was difficult sneaking her into my basement every morning just before dawn, and sneaking her back up as the sun set. And then too, when I found the last tiny skeleton of Billy's erstwhile iguana colony behind the washing machine, I wondered about Della's food supply. Probably I should have done something about it right then, while I was thinking about it. Because as it turned out, sure enough, Della was undone by her appetite like many a woman before her.

If only the PTA hadn't been asked to handle the local blood drive that year.

The blood drive was held in the community room of the First Presbyterian Church, and since I could type I was given the four o'clock to eight o'clock shift typing out registration cards in the hallway. I could barely see around the corner to where several people lay on hospital gurneys which had been brought to the community room, bright red tubes snaking down into plastic sacks beside each of them. The scene made me slightly nauseous, so I tried to keep my eyes on my cards.

"Name?" I asked the person who had moved to stand in front of my typing table.

"Jack Smasal."

"Age?"

"Thirty-five."

"Health problems?"

"None."

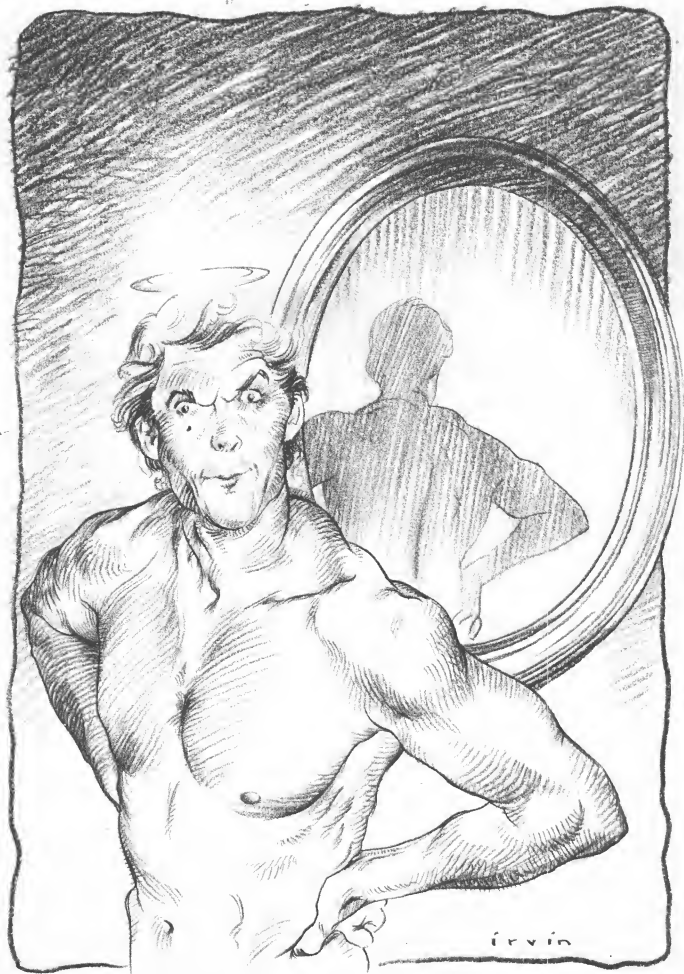
"Will you please take this card and lie down on one of the gurneys just inside the door to your left? Thank you."

I inserted a fresh card into my typewriter, and a few seconds later I felt another person standing before me.

"Name?"

Silence.

(continued on page 82)



irvin

THAT FEARFUL SYMMETRY

*What a piece of work is man,
how noble in reason.*

by Algis Budrys

ILLUSTRATION BY TREVOR IRVIN

Three cc's of stimulant directly into the heart muscle; that is the final step in the procedure. As it emerges the needle plucks at the smooth flesh between the arching ribs. Even before it is full returned, there is a jump somewhere. A hand has twitched, or a foot.

There is a gasp. The ribs heave. Doctor Baron bends an ear to the chest, one hand spread over the solar plexus, the other blindly dropping the spent syringe into a tray.

Wires and tubes trail from the wakening body on the slab of stainless steel. They lead to a bank of monitoring instruments. "Good rhythm!" the assistant calls from his observing station. "We have good rhythm. All vital signs nominal."

But Doctor Baron cares nothing for instrument readings now. He feels for the flutter of nervous excitation. He listens to the steady clenching and unclenching of that great engine in the vault of the massive chest. Doctor Baron's mouth is parted in awe and pride.

He turns his attention to the face. The classically curved lips are twitching. The aquiline nostrils are flaring. The russet-lashed lids are drawing back from the great, luminous eyes. Those eyes lose their unfocused stare and are turned on him now with a



blunt intelligence.

The lips are licked. The organ-pipe voice catches on the first consonant, then comes forth, not a question but a demand: "What?" The broad torso rises vastly, braced by the mighty arm and hands. Only Doctor Baron's eyes can find the myriad suture lines in the bronzed skin, so delicately did he place them. The new Adam is the creature of a dream.

The majestic head, maned in ringlets, is lifted on the muscled neck. The face is thrust toward him; a demigod's face. Once again, that voice is pre-
saged by the throb of the curved throat. "Speak!"

"You live!" Doctor Baron whis-

pers, conscious of the break in his own voice and of the tremble in his arms. His knees feel weak. The impulse is to retreat, but he fears he might stumble. Tears appear in his eyes. "I made you and you live!"

The head turns and the eyes search the laboratory while the hands roam the arms and torso, plucking out IV needles and telemetry sensors. The heavily thewed legs are swung over the edge of the table. The creature pads to the full-length mirror on the back of the door.

He regards himself up and down. He shifts into little stances, the muscles playing, and a trace of a grin begins to pull at one corner of the mouth. He cocks his head and peers. His pleasure fades.

He half turns, and over his shoulder studies the skillful melding of arm into shoulder, of thigh into buttock and of buttocks into the upward sweep of the spine. He regards the tapering expanse of the upper back. The lips fall into a frown.

He confronts the doctor terribly. His hands are rising. They sweep out, describing long arches at the ends of the thrashing arms. His fingertips flutter. His manner is peckish. "You!" he accuses. "I can hardly make out the halo at all, and you appear to have completely overlooked the wings!" ■





CLAY DEVILS

The small figurines had summoned something evil from the badlands beyond the village.

by Pat Murphy

ILLUSTRATION BY THERESA KING

Dolores dreams of the devil one night. The devil of her dream is one of the many devils who live in the *malpais*, the bad lands outside the village. He is tall with a craggy face and a body covered with coarse dark hair, like the hair of a goat. Dark red horns grow from his head.

He leers at her, and his teeth are long and yellowed, like the teeth in a coyote skull that she once saw in the desert. He reaches for her with his long claws, but she wakes before he can catch her.

Tomas, her husband, and Esperanza, her daughter, are still sleeping when she slips silently from beneath the blanket and pulls on her thin cotton dress. The sun's first pale light is shining between the loosely woven branches that form three walls of the kitchen, a small shelter built on the

back of the one-room adobe house. Dolores opens the door to the wooden chicken coop, and the two chickens, skinny birds that never grow fat, ruffle their feathers and peer nervously out the door.

In the hearth, a few coals from last night's fire still glow. She fans them to life and feeds them with tinder, saving the cost of a match. By the time Tomas wakes up, she has ground the corn meal on the grinding stone, cooked tortillas for breakfast, and packed a lunch of tortillas and beans for her husband to take with him to the fields where he will spend the day working.

Tomas uses a gourd bowl to scoop water from the aluminum can that stands just outside the kitchen. He splashes his face, dries it on his shirt, then stands for a moment in the kitchen.

DEVILS

en doorway, gazing out at the hills. A few drops of water, caught in the hairs on his arm, glisten in the sunlight like bits of broken glass by the roadside.

"Soon, the American will come," he says without looking at her.

Dolores, like many of the women in her village, makes clay toys and whistles that her husband sells to tourist shops in the city market. One man—an old American—was particularly pleased with Dolores' work: clever whistles shaped like doves, like owls, like chickens, like dogs baying at the moon; miniature clay men and women, dressed like the people of her village. The American had asked Tomas whether Dolores made other clay figurines, and Tomas, eager to do business, had said yes, she made many beautiful figures. The American had arranged with Tomas to come to their village and see the beautiful things that Dolores made.

"Yes, says Dolores, putting another tortilla to cook. "In a few days, I will fire the toys and paint them."

Tomas nods. He is a good-looking young man and Dolores knows that he wants to do well at business. He has never been content to work in the field—he complains that the afternoon sun makes his head hurt and using a short-handled hoe to knock down weeds makes his back ache. He wants to wear black store-made pants, rather than the homemade white trousers that village men wear when they work in the fields.

Esperanza toddles from her bed to stand by her mother, and Dolores gives her a warm tortilla to eat.

"Today, I will make many figurines," Dolores says, and Tomas nods his approval. Soon, he takes his lunch and goes to the fields to work.

The clay, which Tomas helped Dolores carry from the river, is wrapped in black plastic to keep it damp. Warmed by the sun, the clay feels good in her hands. It smells of the river; aromas of dark secrets and ancient places. Dolores kneads the clay like dough, squeezing out air bubbles that would make her pottery burst in the firing. After kneading the clay smooth, she breaks a handful

away from the rest and begins smoothing it into shape, trying to think of something to make that will please an American.

Esperanza plays in the dirt and sings to herself, a series of notes without a tune. The chickens scratch in the dusty weeds, searching for insects to eat. On the roof, doves make small mournful sounds, grieving for some long forgotten loss.

The house is on the very edge of the village, and Dolores looks out onto the rolling pine-covered hills of the *malpais*, where devils live. Without thinking, Dolores shapes a little man with a craggy face, deepset

Dolores dreams of a bat-winged devil who is dancing on a platform of human skulls; of a snake devil who has caught a naked woman in his coils.

eyes, and horns that curl from his forehead.

When Dolores was a little girl, only a little older than Esperanza is now, her grandfather warned her about the devils in the *malpais*. "Don't go walking there alone," he said. "Or the devils will take you with them to Hell." Grandfather said that he heard the sounds of a devil snuffling around the house on the night that Pedro, Dolores' favorite brother, died of fever. When Dolores' father got drunk and could not work, grandfather blamed the devils. When Dolores was stung by a scorpion, grandfather knew that the devils were at fault. When she was a little girl, Dolores had feared the devils. She knew that they were responsible for the bad things that happened in the village.

Now, a grown woman, she refuses to be afraid of a clay doll that she can twist in her hands. She gives her toy devil grasping talons and a gaping smile that shows his sharp teeth. She bends his legs so that he is dancing and tilts his head back so that he is laughing. A silly devil, a child's toy.

Dolores puts him in the sun to dry and begins working another handful of clay. She finds herself making another laughing devil. This time, she gives him a guitar to strum with his long sharp claws, so that he may play while his brother dances. Together, they dry in the sun. Another devil, a trumpet player, joins them.

She does not like the look of the three devils, lying on their backs in the sun and laughing, probably at something evil. But she leaves them and hurries to make other figures: a whistle shaped like a frog and one shaped like a dove; a clay burro with its neck outstretched to Bray; five clay goats and a man to tend them.

Finally, when the sun is high overhead, she wraps the rest of the clay in the black plastic, gives Esperanza a tortilla to eat, and begins her other chores: carrying water from the public fountain, gathering firewood from the *malpais*, pulling weeds from her small garden. She puts beans to soak for the evening meal and sweeps the dirt floor of the house with a twig broom.

Just before Tomas comes home, she checks her pottery. The figures are warm to the touch. The afternoon sun is red upon the devils, touching the dark clay with light the color of blood. The laughing figure makes her uneasy, but she is not a little girl, to be so easily frightened.

When Tomas comes home, she shows him the figures. He picks up one of the devils—in the afternoon sun, the clay has already stiffened. He examines the figure casually, just as he might examine a whistle or a clay burro. "The American will like these," he predicts. And he pokes the devil lightly in the belly, as if tickling the small figure. "Oh, how he dances." Tomas' presence banishes her uneasiness and she smiles at her own fears.

That night, when Esperanza is sleeping, Tomas makes love to Dolores. The night is warm and they throw back the thin blanket. Their bed frame is built of wooden packing crates, and the slats creak beneath their shifting bodies, a rhythmic song that keeps time to her soft moans. With his arm around her, she falls asleep and has no dreams.

A few days later, she fires the pottery in a pit that she has dug on a barren path of ground near the house. When she lights the wood and straw, flames cackle and the wood snaps like gunfire. The heat of the fire touches her face, hotter than the afternoon sun, and Esperanza crows with delight, clapping her hands to see the

flames. Black smoke from the straw rises like thunderclouds.

Dolores goes about her chores while the fire burns: carrying water to her garden, fetching firewood to replace the wood she has burned, going to the market to buy a little rice, a little chili. Late in the afternoon, the fire has burned low. With a green branch, she rakes away the ashes, uncovering the blackened figurines. Soot-colored dove whistles nestle in the ashes; baying dogs lift their blackened heads. Two goats have broken, cracking when the air trapped within the clay expanded in the heat of the fire. But the devils are intact. Silently, they play their instruments with their inhuman hands, laughing and dancing on the smoking ground.

The next day, she paints the figures with the bright paints that Tomas brought her from the city. She leaves the devils until last, then gives them red horns and yellow teeth and flashing golden eyes. The bright colors shimmer in the afternoon sun, and the devils leer at her as she works, staring with their bulging eyes.

The American is a thin gray-haired man in a brightly flowered shirt and pale brown pants. His face and the top of his head, visible through his sparse hair, are reddened from the sun. He speaks Spanish well, and he is very polite.

He is a very clean man: his hands are pale and soft. Dolores notices that his fingernails are clean and as neat as a woman's. He picks up a dove whistle with his soft hand and looks at it, turning the toy this way and that.

Tomas stands beside the American, his legs wide apart, his thumbs hooked in the waistband of his trousers. "They are very good," Tomas says. "Very beautiful." He is like a nervous rooster, strutting for show.

Dolores stands back, keeping her eyes down, her hands hidden in her apron. She is wearing her best dress, the newer of the two she owns, but she is ashamed of her looks. Her own fingernails are broken and stained with clay.

The American says nothing. He puts the dove down and picks up the dancing devil. One by one, he examines each of the devils. "The others are pleasant, but nothing special," he says at last, dismissing the other toys with a wave. "But these show imagination. I know a few folk art collectors in America who..." He stops without finishing his sentence. "I will buy these," he says, pointing to the devils.

"And I would like to see more."

Before he leaves, he and Tomas shake hands. They will do business.

That evening, Tomas buys tequila with money from the American. Other men from the village come to hear him brag of his success. Dolores watches from the doorway of the house.

The men sit on the rusting hulk of an old car that was abandoned on the edge of the *malpais*. The car's wheels were stolen long ago. Now the car rests on its belly, and men perch on its rusted hood. They drink tequila and laugh loudly. The light from the setting sun paints them red. Their shad-



ows stretch away into the *malpais*.

Dolores dreams that night of devils. One is feathered like a rooster and he struts through the dream, puffing out his chest and preening his shiny horns. Another has a bulging belly, like an old sow with a litter. His ears are hairy, like the ears of a pig, and his horns curl like goat horns.

Tomas has little to say at breakfast. His eyes are red and weary-looking, and he complains that his head hurts. He pushes Esperanza away when she comes to kiss him good morning. "Make more devils," he tells Dolores before he goes to the fields.

She comforts Esperanza and makes devils of clay. In her hands, the fat devil becomes fatter. Her fingers smooth the round curve of its belly, a pig's belly supported by spindly legs. His ears droop mournfully as he dries in the sun. He is a ridiculous devil, a child's toy, but somehow she cannot laugh at him.

From a handful of clay, she makes the strutting rooster devil, with its puffed out chest and his nose like a beak. The devil looks foolish, but Dolores is uneasy. The devils stink of

dark and ancient places, and she remembers her grandfather's tales.

"Never call the evil one by name," her grandfather told her. "If you do, you will call him to you and give him power."

She pats the clay, molding the delicate shapes of devil's horns and wondering what her grandfather would say about these toys. A breeze blows from the *malpais* and she feels ill, weak and feverish.

Tomas insists on bringing the devils into the house that evening. He sets them on a shelf beside the bed, pokes the fat one in the belly, and laughs.

Again, Tomas and his friends sit on the old car and drink tequila. Dolores goes to bed, but she does not sleep. She can hear Tomas talking and the laughter of his friends. And she hears other sounds—small sounds, like mice searching for grains of corn on the dirt floor. She lies awake, knowing that the devils are moving on the shelf, their claws scratching against the wood.

She is awake when Tomas stumbles into the house. He brings his bottle of tequila with him: she hears the clink of glass as he sets the bottle down by the bed, the rustle of clothing as he takes off his shirt. He lies beside her in the bed, and she turns toward him. His breath stinks of tequila, and he pulls her toward him, pressing his lips against her throat. He makes love to her in the darkness, but she thinks of the devils, watching from the shelf. The bed sings, but she is silent. At last, Tomas sleeps.

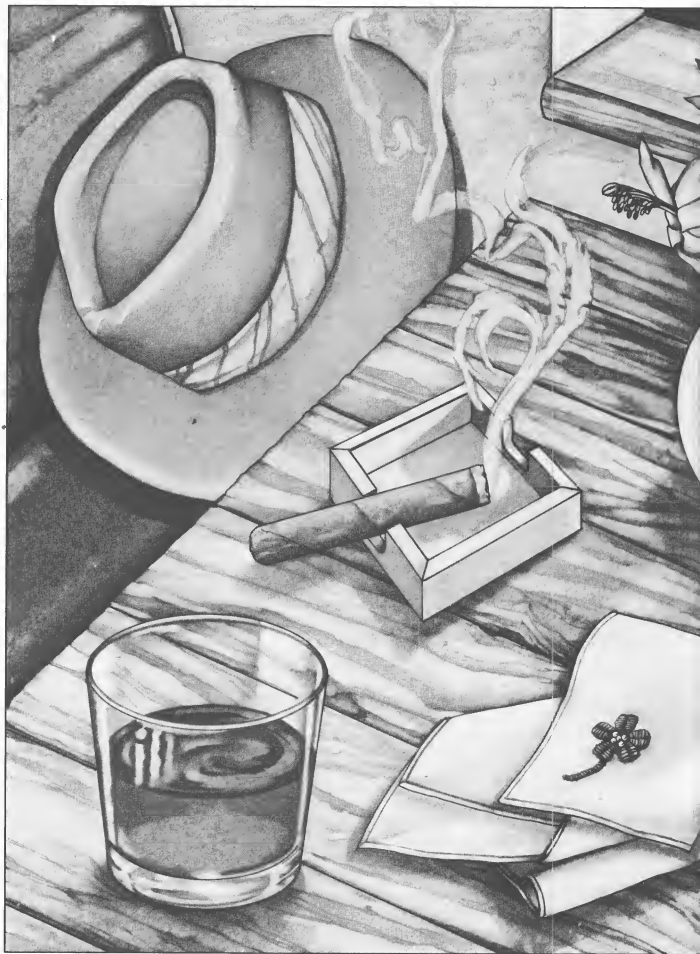
While her husband and daughter sleep, Dolores listens to the devils moving on the shelf. In the morning, the devils are quiet, standing as if they had never moved. That morning, on her way to fetch water from the public fountain, Dolores stops at the house of the *curandera*, the village healer and herbalist.

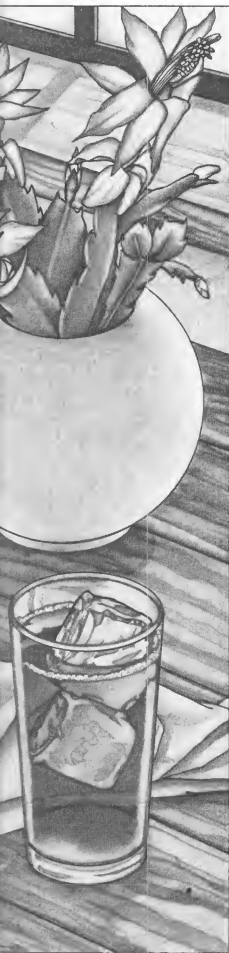
Dona Ramon's house and yard have a pungent smell from the drying herbs in the rafters and the growing herbs in the yard. Esperanza stays close by her mother, her eyes wide, a little fearful of Dona Ramon.

Dolores tells Dona Ramon of the American who wants devils, of her terrible dreams, and of the sounds she hears at night.

The old woman nods. "These devils will bring you bad luck," she says. "When you make them, you give the devil power. You call the devils from

(continued on page 81)





The Flat-Brimmed Hat

*At the edge of her despair,
a hand reached out to her
across the gulf of time.*

by Nancy Etchemendy

ILLUSTRATION BY LINDA MIYAMOTO

Balanced on the crumbly bedrock cliff at the edge of the old V&T Grade, Kathy wondered whether she really wanted to do it, and if so, whether this was really the way she wanted to do it. She took a deep breath, then another and another. The jagged rocks and the green valley far below flickered like an old-time movie. Dizzy, she backed up a step and forced herself to breathe more evenly. If she was going to do it, she wanted to do it on purpose—not just hyperventilate herself into unconsciousness and drop over the edge like a sack of potatoes.

The thin, sweet call of a mountain bluebird drifted down to her from a nearby juniper. The wild smells of sagebrush and pinyon pine and sun-

warmed rocks rode on the back of the wind that came up the grade. She really wanted to do it. There was, after all, more to life than bluebirds and sagebrush. She stepped forward, closed her eyes, ducked her head, and stuck her arms out in front of her. The whole business would be much easier if she pretended she was jumping off the high-dive at the municipal swimming pool. One, two, three. She bent her knees, considered holding her nose, then realized she didn't need to. Not this time.

Someone grabbed her by the shoulder. A resonant contralto poured through the high desert stillness. "Hey, cookie. Give us both a break. You don't really want to do that."

Kathy went rigid, partly from

Hat

fear, partly from anger. She had, after all, gone to great lengths to make sure nobody would interrupt her. She had walked four hours to get to this place—the summit of a road so dilapidated that only hikers, horses, and lunatics in jeeps dared traverse it. She had, after all, lived down there in that stupid valley all her life. She knew nobody came here. The old-timers had forgotten about it, and the newcomers didn't care about good views unless they could see them from a living room window.

There were chinks in Kathy's black despair. And fury, like blasting powder, was packed inside them all. She curled her hands into hard rock fists and turned around.

A small woman stood before her, slender hands settled on narrow hips. The woman regarded Kathy with sunlit brown eyes and an infuriating half-smile. She wore an embroidered cotton shirt like the ones Kathy had often admired in the window of Parker's Saddle Shop. But the flat-brimmed hat that rode far back among her short glossy curls looked South American, and her jeans had an odd cut to them—high-waisted with pleats. Fussy and impractical, thought Kathy.

She put on the sneer she used whenever she had to deal with unpleasant people—her drunken stepfather, the landlady's self-righteous daughter, and lately Reese Vanderberg as well.

"Just who do you think you are, sneaking up on me like that? Why don't you mind your own business?" Kathy spit the words out like lit firecrackers.

The woman grinned. She had strong, white teeth. A network of spider's-web laugh lines appeared at the corners of her eyes. She held out her left hand. A jagged, pale scar ran from the first joint of her index finger to the second.

Kathy knew the scar. She had one exactly like it on her own left index finger. She blinked, struggling to remember whether she had actually jumped off the cliff. Maybe she was dreaming this on the way to the ground. Or maybe she was dead.

"Just call me Kate," said the woman. "Whether you like it or not,

minding my own business includes minding yours."

"Huh?" said Kathy, scratching her nose. It burned. She'd been out in the sun too long.

"Sweetie, you don't have to understand it, just believe it. I'm you. I'm the woman you're going to be fifteen years from now. Look at me. Why are you trying to wreck my life like this?"

Kathy squinted. Now that she thought of it, the woman did look a little familiar, in a middle-aged kind of way.

Kate took a cellophane-wrapped cigar out of her pocket. She offered it to Kathy. "No thanks," said Kathy.

*She wore the
dusty hat as if
it were a part of
her, tipped back
in an easy way to
reveal damp curls
just turning gray.
Her whole body
told a story of
pleasure.*

"They make me sick."

"Yeah, they used to make me sick, too." Chuckling, Kate peeled away the cellophane. "Ten years from now, you'll buy a sports car and take up smoking just because you like the idea of a woman driving fast cars and smoking good cigars."

"Oh yeah?" said Kathy. She was beginning to feel the way she had a few years ago after she had drunk a bottle of peppermint schnapps with a friend—a little queasy and not altogether certain about the line between what was real and what was not.

Kate stuck the cigar in her mouth and sucked on it, unlit. She took Kathy firmly by the arm and led her away from the precipice, back onto the road.

"So what's bothering you this time? I can't quite remember," she said, her words wet and pleasant.

"If you were really me, you'd remember," said Kathy.

Kate laughed and nipped the end off the cigar with her large, familiar teeth. "Sweetie, you're so dramatic. I admit you don't come this close very often, but you think about it: all the

time. How the hell am I supposed to keep one trauma separate from the next?"

"I don't think about it all the time!" said Kathy.

Kate snorted as she lit a wooden match and cupped it expertly away from the breeze. "Give me a break," she said, puffing until a cloud of white smoke rose from between her hands.

Kathy kicked a pebble. She listened as it rattled down the precipice, striking other rocks on its way to the ground. She shivered. "I got jilted."

"Oh, yeah," said Kate. "I remember now. That golden-haired jerk. Reese what's-his-name."

"Reese Vanderberg is not a jerk. And how would you know? You can't even get his name right."

"Look. I can't get his name right because fifteen years from now, you won't be able to get his name right. Fifteen years from now, Reese Vanderberg will be an insurance salesman with a Lincoln Continental and two preppy jerk kids, whom he will have gotten from that blond airhead, Sally what's-her-name. Believe me, cookie, there are better things than that in store for you."

Kathy kicked another pebble. "Sally, huh? Yeah. Sally's a creep. And if Reese would rather have Sally, then he's a creep, too."

"Come on. It's not that bad he'd rather have Sally. And it's not as if you're up here getting ready to jump off a cliff just because Vanderberg jilted you. You say that to me because it's what you'd say to some stranger. But we both know there's more to it than that."

Kathy had sat awake in a chair all night, swept and tumbled by the old familiar river of dark thoughts. Reese had tried to touch and kiss her, and she had tried to let him. But her body had betrayed her, in the pattern that had grown smooth through repetition—smooth as a stone in a glacial creek. She had stiffened, pulled back. She felt the surprise in his hands, saw it flutter like the shadow of a luna moth across his face. She grabbed her clothes and ran. And Reese shouted after her, words so filthy and unkind that she could hardly bear to think about them.

She hunched her shoulders and looked over at Kate. Kate wore the dusty hat as if it were a part of her, tipped back in an easy way to reveal damp curls just beginning to turn gray around her ears. Her whole body told a story of pleasure, in the swing of

her shoulders as she walked, in the rise and fall of her small breasts as she tasted the sweet tobacco smoke. The lines around Kate's eyes and mouth looked custom-made to mysterious specifications. Those lines cradled smiles, frowns, and dreams the way Kathy had always wanted to cradle a man. She was beautiful.

Kathy felt a dull red flower of grief blossom suddenly inside her. She could never be like that. Never. A tear splattered onto her boot.

Kate shoved a handkerchief into Kathy's hand. Kathy scrubbed viciously at her eyes. The handkerchief was made of lavender silk, and had a violet embroidered on it. It smelled like cigars. She wadded it into a wrinkled ball and flung it back at Kate. "Now I know you're not me," she said. "I wouldn't be caught dead carrying around a thing like that."

Kate stuck the handkerchief back in her pants pocket, and gave Kathy a sidelong frown. She turned her gaze back to the rutted road and the junipers that clung to the hillside above it. "All right. You want to know why you're gonna be carrying silk handkerchiefs around someday? Because there's a man in your future who likes them."

Kathy shook her head. "There's no man in my future."

"Suit yourself," said Kate, shrugging.

Kathy wondered why she would want a man in her future anyway. She shoved her hands deep into the pockets of her wash-softened jeans, and found the arrowhead Reese had given her there. She rubbed her thumb hard along the sharp flint edge. She thought about the way her father had beaten her mother until she couldn't stand up any more. She thought about her stepfather, who acted like a stud in rut every time he got drunk. Her heart kept telling her they weren't all like that. But her body just wouldn't believe it.

Kathy looked at Kate again. Kate smiled at her. Kate's face seemed so much at home with smiles. Was it true? Was it possible that Kathy's own face would someday look like that? In the desert sun, something sparkled on one of the fingers of Kate's left hand. A plain gold wedding ring. Kathy blinked, dazzled.

They rounded a curve in the road, and there, crouched like a steel tiger, sat Kathy's jeep, almost brand new, with all the extras, the kind Kathy had always wanted. Its deep burgundy paint was scratched and

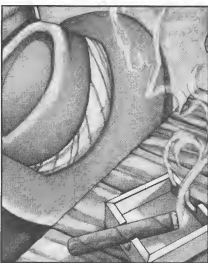
dusty. Kathy stared at it, dreaming of the places a machine like that could take her, of hillsides and valleys and canyons a million miles away.

"Is that yours? Where'd you get it?"

Kate rubbed her neck slowly, gazing at the jeep as if she herself found it somewhat mysterious. "Yeah. It's mine... I bought it about six months ago from a guy in Queens who told me it could take me places I'd never believe." She gave Kathy a little grin. "I guess he was right."

"Queens?" said Kathy.

"Yeah. Queens," said Kate, eyes sparkling. "Hop in."



Kathy climbed into the passenger seat, yelping as the heat from the sun-baked black naugahide crept through her thin shirt. Kate tossed her hat into the back, ran her fingers through her sweat-soaked hair. She winked.

"What do you think, sweetie? Isn't this better than some blond jerk's Lincoln Continental?"

Kathy grinned. "Could be," she said.

Kate caressed the gearshift lever and twisted the key in the ignition. "Put your seat belt on, cookie."

The jeep roared and leapt off in a cloud of sand and thunder. Kathy clung to the seat the way she had clung to Reese when he took her on the double ferris wheel at the country fair.

Kate drove like a maniac, laughing as they fish-tailed around curves and sailed airborne over chuckholes and washouts. The cigar jutted from the corner of her mouth, alternately emitting vast wind-blown clouds, and waving as Kate chewed on it.

At the top of the V&T Grade, Kate shifted down and the jeep's fat

tires screamed as they grabbed the pavement of the main road to Silver City, the half-abandoned mining town on the other side of the hills. They roared like a fire engine past the crumbling graveyard and the entrance to the old Fairman Tunnel. They sprayed dust at the Sutro Hotel, and startled the mangy brown dog that lay in the sun on Main Street. When they skidded to a stop in front of Old Pete's Crystal Saloon, Kathy discovered that she was out of breath, and her fingers ached from hanging on so tightly. She wanted more.

"Come on. I'll buy you a drink," Said Kate, clapping the flat-brimmed hat onto her head.

Kathy wobbled into the dark coolness of the saloon like a sailor who has just left his ship. Wooden ceiling fans stirred the dry air above her head. A row of slot machines stood against one wall. Shelves lined the other walls, crowded with bits of junk that Old Pete had collected--rocks with fool's gold embedded in them, broken arrowheads, rusty mill gears, and pieces of peeling harness. A jukebox played soft country music from a corner in the back. Kathy climbed onto a stool beside Kate at the massive oak bar.

"Afternoon, ladies. What'll it be?" said Old Pete, wiping his hands on his dirty white apron.

"Double bourbon, neat," said Kate.

"Uh ... root beer," said Kathy. Pete washed and dried two glasses. He smiled, revealing a mouth full of night, married only by two brownish teeth. He contemplated Kate and Kathy with friendly eyes which too many years of sun had made wet and milky. "Mother and daughter, right?" he said.

"Guess again," said Kate.

"Pete puckered his thin dry lips. "Sisters?"

"Yeah, something like that." She winked and picked up their drinks.

Kate led Kathy to a table where they could watch the wind blowing dust along the wooden sidewalks outside. Kathy gazed at her as she took off her hat and tossed it easily onto the seat of the nearest chair. Was it true? Kathy imagined two people standing in a mountain stream. Would water that had touched her ankles touch Kate's someday?

"Who are you ... really?" she asked softly.

Kate rubbed her thumb across the ridges of the bourbon glass. In the dim light of the saloon, her eyes were black

Hat

lakes. "I swear to you, this is the truth. This morning I woke up just after sunrise, and I got dressed, and I went for a walk in Central Park. I thought, I'm thirty-three years old, and it's June twenty-first, and fifteen years ago to the day, I almost jumped off a cliff. I would have done it. Except a woman named Kate stopped me."

She lifted the bourbon and took a long swallow. "I thought about how fine the morning sun always looks, whether I see it on a wild lake or a row of city windows. And I knew it was time to go back, time to find you. I just knew what to do. Someday you will, too."

Kathy sipped at her root beer. It tasted like an old tin can. But her throat cried out for something to soothe away the sudden dryness. "Central Park? That's in New York, isn't it?"

Kate smiled and nodded. She slipped her wedding ring off and slid it across the table to Kathy. Kathy picked it up. It felt heavy and warm and real. She closed her eyes and pressed the ring hard into her palm, trying to imagine a life that included things like Central Park, and Queens, and South American hats, and a man who loved a woman who smoked cigars and carried a lavender silk handkerchief crumpled up in her pocket.

"Trust me, cookie," said Kate. "Your future is worth staying around for."

One tear, then another dropped onto the shining tabletop between Kathy's hands. She slid the ring back to Kate.

"Promise?" she whispered.

"I promise."

Kate finished her bourbon in a long, last swallow, stood up, and grinned. "People are waiting for me," she said. "Good-bye, cookie. Take care of yourself." She turned and walked through the saloon doors to the street.

Several seconds passed before Kathy could overcome her confusion enough to move. Kate had forgotten her hat. "Kate!" she shouted. "Wait a minute!"

She shoved her chair back, grabbed the hat, and ran outside. She squinted up and down the sun-bleached street. But the wooden sidewalks and the dil-

apidated buildings stood deserted in the dry wind. The old dog had not stirred from his place in the middle of the road. The jeep had disappeared. And Kate was nowhere to be seen.

Kathy turned the hat over and over in her hands. It was made of heavy wool felt, flexible but sturdy. Grimy finger-prints darkened the brim where Kate had habitually touched it.

Inside the crown she found a small leather sticker that said *Producto de Buenos Aires* in shiny gold letters.

Just for fun, she clapped the hat over her own short curls. It fit perfectly. It smelled like peanuts and cigars and sweet green grass.

Kathy smiled and stuck her hands in her pockets, wondering how far away New York City was. ■



WINTER GATHERING

(continued from page 21)

since a'one of them bothered to let go a squack.

"Oh no, barn door's open. Afraid to look. Bet some damned ol' raccoon got my chickens in the night. Mercy, more bad luck. But what's this? Pen's all closed up tight and proper. All the girls are inside and *alive*. And this ... what's this? If that ain't a nanny goat then I'm the queen. And Cat sittin' curled up right on that goat's back in the straw."

"Cat, what's all this then? Don't deny it, I know you're responsible."

"Don't she look innocent though? Ignorin' me and just lickin' her hind leg without a care in the world."

"Cat, we can't keep someone else's goat, no matter how hungry we are. You got to take it back. It's not that I don't appreciate the thought ..."

"Got to think who'd be missin' a goat. The Stevenses up the way have a couple sorry-lookin' cows. All Old man Kelsey's got are them three lazy-ass dogs. Shoot! Maybe she is a stray. These days anything is possible. Now look at her get up. Sure is good sized, why her teats are hangin' near the ground. Sure needs milkin'."

"Milki! Milki! Magic Cat you done it again."

"I got to cry this time, got to. No, not yet ... find a bucket first."

"Oh Susie-girl, wait till you see."

I'm startin' to feel like real folks. Hens somehow managed to squeeze out four eggs, got fresh goat's milk, a fine fire, my baby, and Cat. Never been so rich. Since it's rainin', I'm takin' the rest of the day off. Gonna pretend we're up in town and ladies of leisure. Gonna braid Susie's hair just like mine. Bet there's a piece of ribbon for us, too. Cat's gettin' a good long brushin'. Me, I'm takin' a bath. A slow steamy one. Got some of them pretty bath salts Aunt Louise sent ages ago. How good they smell, all lavender and roses, like ladies with teacups, smilin'.

Cain't get over that nanny goat in the barn. No tether, collar, nothin'. Almost feel like we stole her. But she seems so content to be here settled in just like Cat. If this family keeps growin' we'll have to move uptown.

My, I haven't felt this ... calm in such a long time. Too bad all rainy days can't be just like today.

"What's the matter, Cat? Why you jump like that? Stop that yowlin', makes my skin crawl! Oh God. Oh goddamn no! It's that man. He's come back. No, no just when things were good. Listen to him huffin' and puffin' outside. Sweet Jesus, he's drunk. Bound to beat me. Hush, Susie, hush. Don't let him hear you fuss. He'll beat me all the more for raisin' a willful child."

"Woman!" How he bellows. "Woman open this door."

"Get away you old sot. You don't live here no more!"

Where's my head? Why'd I say such a thing? He's sure to beat me to death now ... but just let him try.

"Hear me, get!"

"Lousy whore. If it weren't for me you'd still be livin' in that toilet of yer Daddy's I found you in. Open this door. My door. My house."

He's gonna tear it down. Got to open it.

"Scat, Cat. You don't want to be in his way. God help us all. Please don't let him hurt Susie."

I'll stand up to him this time, and hope he don't break my jaw, or worse. That axe is right handy. I'll use it, I swear, if he touches my baby. The doorknob bites my hand with its cold.

Screamn' and blasphemn' he got me. Like a fallin' ladder, I could see it comin' but there was nothin' I could do. Cain't even hear what he's sayin', just a big noise all wrapped up in a cloud of cheap whiskey. My arm should hurt where he's holdin' on and twisting. This is like a dream, and the only thing that's clear is the way he looks: ain't shaved in five or six days, washed either. There's dirt in the lines around his red sow eyes. Never saw this blue plaid shirt afore, but I know the hand at the end of it. Bigger than any other hand in the county. Hair growing all the way up to the second knuckle, calloused, red, scarred. Somehow I know today when he hits me with that hand it'll split wide open. I'm harder than he is today. Won't he be surprised to find that out?

Why see? See? He let go of me already. He can feel the difference in me. I'm here standing up. He's the one with blood all over his face. Blood ... blood ... I wished for this and it's comin' true. It's her work: my Magic Cat had claws ... and sharp teeth ... and my man. On his shoulders with all her hair on end she looks twice her own size.

I see everything.

For the first time in his life that man is scared. Oh, look at him run now, right down the road with Cat scratchin' and bitin' and holdin' on to his neck. He won't be back. He won't never be back.

Susie-Child is sleeping. I can't. Cat is still out there. Until she's home, I wait. There's more magic to her than I understand. And I belong to her now. We both belong to her.

Morning already, and Cat here on my lap. Don't remember letting her in. Land o'Goshen, look at her, like she o'been to the beauty parlor. Coat's all fluffy and clean. Never think she spent the night raisin' Hell in the rain on my old man's back. I swear she's added weight. Cain't find her ribs like before. Ha. Now she's over tickling Susie ever so gently. Maybe today will be the day to celebrate. First I'll take care of the animals, then I'll get that bath.

There's someone drivin' up to the house. Police. I knew things were goin' too good to be true. That filthy man's gonna have the deputy shoot Cat, take my baby away and throw me in jail!

"Hide, Cat!"

Under the chair, guess that's as good a place as any. Better smile at this young man. Maybe there's nothin' to fear.

"Mornin' deputy."

"Mornin' ma'am."

My, but if he ain't as nervous as an old sittin' hen.

"Sorry to disturb you ma'am. But ... ah ... well, have you seen your ... ah husband, just recently, ma'am?"

I got to tell the truth, as much as I dare. "Well, sir ... he done took off on me and the child a good fortnight ago. Did come around yesterday, afore noon, all liquored up. I run him off. Ain't been back. He get into some more kind trouble?"

"No ma'am ... he's dead. A farmer found his body in a ditch up on Owen Road, 'bout three-quarters of a mile from here. Ahhh ... he was tore up pretty bad. Looks like he'd been there in the weeds most of the night. Sheriff says he musta passed out and ... well ... some wild animal got at him. Badger maybe, or a couple wild dogs ... maybe."

I feel like I'm drownin' in white light. That's all I can see. Heart about to burst, hands floatin' past my face, and a wild roaring ... roaring ... roaring.

WINTER GATHERING

It was a nasty business with the police. I was sure they suspected I had something to do with that no-good man's death. But they wrote it down that he was "attacked by unknown wild animals." I could see none of them believed it, even out in our wild part of the country. But what other "evidence" could they find? I hardly believe it myself. Maybe the smell of blood and the heavy night brought them to him. The Devil for dirty business.

Now that I'm home again I can breathe free. Susie's sleepin' so good and sound. Not a whimper from her all through it. Despite the bad weather and bad times she looks stronger. It's an omen. If I was a church-goin' woman I'd be afeared.

This coffee takes the chill off the room. Fire's pickin' up steam. Soon it'll be right cosy again. Why, here comes Cat from under that old over-stuffed chair. Playful as a kitten: rollin' on her back, battin' at my feet, chasin' after some old ... what?

"Cat, what piece of trash you got there? Piece of bark? Come on, give it here now."

Damnation. What have I got in my hand? I didn't know it before, all muddy and chewed. An ear. A human ear. My man's ear.

Cat's eyes flash like green glass in the firelight.

Notin' to do now but sit and rock and think. Cat's at the window, tail switchin'. There's no missin' that man, and I'm well shut of him. Hens are laying like it was May. Goat's settled in and givin' near a gallon a day. And Susie-child is growin' and laughin' and healthy. If I was a church-goin' woman I'd surely be afeared. But I ain't. When I close my eyes I see only good things now and ahead. This Winter will be a time for healing, mending. This Winter will lead to wild growing things and a brand new Spring.

Cat's at the window, tail switchin'. As I touch her sparks fly between us. We are her family. This is our home. Snow silently taps the glass: the first of the season. Cat stretches, yawns and winks, purring. ■

COMMERCIAL MESSAGE

(continued from page 22)

"Yes, I can see that, but he was there, that's the point."

"What would you like me to do? I'm eager to assist you."

"Just forget it." She grabbed a tube of Shimmer and tossed it into her cart and when she looked back, the clerk was gone.

Now that some of the shock of the handsome man's rash action had worn off she realized who that man had looked like. The Shimmer Man from TV. The guy obviously got his kicks haunting supermarkets pretending to be the Shimmer Man.

She swung her cart down the next aisle and grabbed a can of Perky Coffee. Before she could put it in, a woman stepped between her and the cart.

"Think it over," the woman prompted, with an Italian accent so thick that Linda didn't understand her at first. "I'ma Mama Orsini, and I'd like to help you make a better cup of coffee." The woman took down a can of Mama Orsini Coffee and held it up for Linda's inspection.

"In this can is the secret of dark, flavorful coffee. And your marriage could use a little help, no?" The woman winked at her conspiratorially. Her gray hair was plaited into thick braids, wound tightly around her head like a crown.

"I'm not in the habit of discussing my personal life with total strangers," Linda replied, putting the Perky Coffee into her cart. She'd seen Mama Orsini on TV before, too, and she'd never liked her. She liked this look-alike even less.

Mama Orsini clucked her tongue as she reached into Linda's cart and exchanged her brand for the coffee Linda had selected. "Mama Orsini no stranger, Linda. I just-a want to help."

"How did you know my name?"

"The same way I know things not so good with you and your man." She laid a fat, ring-choked hand on Linda's slender shoulder. "You just start serving him some of Mama's coffee, grown up on the tippy-tops of the mountains, where the real-a tasty beans are grown, and you watch-a that man's eyes-a light up."

123

Linda pushed her cart away. She was never going to do the shopping at night again. Every lunatic in town must be at the market tonight, she thought. She could still hear Mama Orsini going on about her wonderful coffee as she walked down the next aisle and tossed a box of Boffo Laundry Detergent into her cart.

"No wonder you've got dingy whites and dull colors."

Linda turned toward the sneering voice. A youngish woman, dressed in a dazzling white tennis outfit that glowed as though it were a minor nova, stood looking haughtily down at her.

"I beg your pardon," Linda said stiffly.

"And well you might," the woman replied. "But certainly you owe more than an apology to those poor children of yours, cursed with a mother who doesn't care enough to spend a few extra pennies a box to get her clothes truly bright and sparkling white, the easy, economical, Dinger Destroyer way!"

"I think you destroyed a little more than dirt, Lady." Linda didn't care how eager to assist the clerks were at Paymore, she'd never, ever shop there again.

Ignoring the tall woman's reply, Linda rounded the bend. As she did so, a man wearing an orange leotard and red tights, the corners of his blue cape fluttering around him, jumped in front of her. She gasped, but at this point, she wasn't really that surprised.

"Don't you feel your children need a vitamin and mineral supplement?" the man demanded, without so much as a hello.

"Aren't you worried you're going to be locked up, running around in that get-up?" she countered.

"I'm Ultraguy, and I'm here to make sure every little Ultraguy and Ultragirl gets all the nutrition they

SIXTH ANNUAL SHORT STORY CONTEST

need to grow up ultra strong and ultra American," he said proudly.

"That's lovely. Now get out of my way or I'm calling the clerk."

"Answer me one question," Ultraguy pressed on in heroic tones.

California Girls was slipping away. Now the best she could hope for would be the last half of the Wednesday Night Movie. It was a good one, about teenage drug addicts who turn to prostitution and finally join a pseudo-religious cult where they contact aliens from another galaxy, and she didn't want to miss it. And it was a toss-up as to who was the most irritating, Ultraguy or those vacuous, grinning clerks....

"Okay, what is it?" she said grudgingly.

"Do you always serve two green vegetables and one yellow at two meals a day?" he boomed.

"Well, no." She felt her confidence slipping. Some dinners she didn't serve any vegetables at all, a nagging little voice in the back of her head whined, just a lousy frozen pizza or some fast food burgers.

"Then your Ultraguy and Ultragal need Ultravites, the vitamins of truly ultra kids!" He held out the bottle to her, flexing his muscles as he did so. She had to admit it to herself, it was a pretty impressive display.

Linda took the bottle and placed it in her cart as she headed for the cooler. She'd need a glass of wine, or two or three, when she got home. Steve was never going to believe this.

She was holding the wine bottle over her cart, just ready to put it in, when a man in a cheap blue suit and severely styled hair that looked as though it'd been lacquered put his hand on her shoulder, shaking his head sadly.

"Alcoholism breaks up families, ruins health, and costs taxpayers millions each year," he intoned

solemnly.

"I'm not an alcoholic," she said, shaking off his hand and defiantly putting the wine in her cart.

"Daniel is the first stage of alcoholism." He smiled maddeningly at her. "You refuse to see the destruction to yourself, your family."

"I am not an alcoholic!"

Unruffled, he continued smoothly.

"The most wonderful thing about Rolling Hills is that we can help even those people too damn pig-headed and stubborn to admit that they need help."

"Take a hike, chump." She opened the cooler and put another bottle of wine in her cart.

"In the peace and serenity of Rolling Hills you will come to appreciate the beauty of life without alcohol, that pathetic crutch of the spineless degenerate."

She dumped a short case of beer on top of the wine. One of the wine bottles cracked and wine dripped onto the floor, forming a puddle beneath the cart.

"You'll learn to truly live again, freed from your disgusting and revolting dependence on demon rum," he said in superior tones.

She popped open a beer and drained it in several gulping swallows, then crushed the can and slapped him across the chest with it. "See that, buddy?" she snarled. "And I've never even had a beer before—I hate the smell of it."

The man shook his head sadly.

She turned on her heel and walked away. Steve could just come out himself and get the groceries, she'd had it with that crazy store.

People began to pour out of the aisles, all the people that had hounded her, whining, shouting, begging.

"Shimmer."

"Mama Orsini."

"Rolling Hills."

Linda ran out into the parking lot, not seeing the car until it was too late. Blinded by the headlights, her screams blended with the squeal of the tires as the car crashed into her.

All the people from the store gathered around her in the pool of illumination from the car's headlights. A man in a white lab coat pushed through the crowd and knelt beside her.

"Sawbones at Your Service," the man said jovially. "Our highly trained medical staff is waiting, twenty-four hours a day, to attend to your every medical emergency. All major insurance plans cheerfully accepted."

A man in a black suit, a briefcase clutched in his hand, elbowed the doctor aside. "It's not too late to make those final plans concerning your burial arrangements," he said.

Linda didn't reply. She was dead.

Linda was dressed in a floor length gown of peach satin, her hair in flowing waves, pulled back at one temple by a rhinestone studded comb. She held a mop in her hand; a bucket sat at her feet.

A man was walking down the aisle of the Paymore store toward her.

"I get all that filthy waxy build-up off my floors just as easy as pie, with the strength of bull's horns, with my new, improved, Bull's-Horn Mop." She smiled broadly at the man, oblivious to the fear on his thin face. "See how fast and easy it is? And I don't even have to wet my hands in harsh cleaning solutions, not with the easy, patented wringer action of the Bull's Horn Mop."

Her smile didn't waver as the man ran, screaming, down the aisle. ■

NEREID

(continued from page 26)

place of employment, and leave the knife unused. She waited until they stood on the same boat and Richard leaned across the double seat with his knife, and then with the aid of their mobile weight she upset them both.

Simon she left to himself, once she saw he hadn't hit his head on the bridge. The river at this point is only three feet deep, and not even the most arthritic of old men could drown in her without assistance. Richard was the problem. As he came up, she pushed a paddleboat over his head to delay him. The day's accumulation of soft and ghostly garbage clustered on his skin. Finding a discarded plastic bag, she shoved it hurriedly down his throat.

By the time Simon returned with a crowd of tourists and a river policeman, she had done with Richard. He was not dead, but he was panicking, and they could not get the plastic bag out of his throat in time.

"Men are very cruel," said the cypress, when she told him.

"So is nature," said the river, quietly. ■

MAN

(continued from page 37)

similarity—it was all down there on the page, practically verbatim."

Dr. Foucher chewed on the end of his ballpoint and nodded his head. Dempsey felt sure that the analyst would say something now, but he didn't. He just kept nodding.

Dempsey told him about his pitiful little battle with Shelton during lunch the day after the reception. At last Dr. Foucher was moved to comment. "What do you think all this means?" he asked.

Dempsey's eyes widened. "I don't have a clue. I was hoping you'd tell me."

"Has this ever happened to you before?" Dempsey just *knew* the analyst was going to say that. It was one of the usual evasions.

"No." He wasn't going to volunteer any more information. Two could play at that game.

"Think back. Didn't you tell me, years ago, about a time when you were at summer camp, and you asked your counselor for seconds at supper-time. Didn't the counselor humiliate you in front of all the other children and then prevent you from attending some special event that evening?"

"I don't remember anything like that," said Dempsey.

"It was the summer when you were fourteen. I recall how upset you were when you came back from camp."

"I'll bet you were real sympathetic, too, thought Dempsey. "I guess I remember. What does it mean?"

"Charles Dickens," said Dr. Foucher. "*Oliver Twist*." Dempsey shuddered. "And how about the time you went to New York City with your father? I remember quite well the report of your adventures. When you went out sightseeing while your father was attending to some business. You took a girl to the theater and then went skating at Rockefeller Center. You hated everyone you met and everything that happened."

Dempsey remembered that day, all right. It had been one of the most horrible days of his adolescence. He shuddered again. When he didn't say anything, Dr. Foucher spread his hands and said, "*The Catcher in the Rye*." J.D. Salinger.

"I'm not copying these people,

honest," said Dempsey. "These things are just happening to me, out of the blue."

"And they've been happening to you for years, apparently. How would you explain it?"

"How the hell would I know?" cried Dempsey. "You're the psychiatrist!"

"Did you read *Oliver Twist* before you went to camp? Did you read *Catcher in the Rye* before you went to New York?"

Dempsey took a few seconds and thought about it. "Yes," he said. "Yes."

"Well, I don't know. Even if you were subconsciously acting out scenes from what you've read, that doesn't

"How would you like to wake up and find yourself in the middle of something weird like Gravity's Rainbow or some wacko surrealist novel?"

explain how or why other people also take appropriate roles in these scenes."

Dempsey felt a wave of coldness flood through him. "What should I do?" he asked.

Dr. Foucher smiled briefly and patted the air. "You'll be fine, there's nothing to worry about. If I were you, however, Mr. Dempsey, I wouldn't read any Stephen King. No sense asking for trouble."

The psychiatrist had made a point, and suggested a terrible truth: Dempsey was at the mercy of anything he'd ever read. He left the doctor's office at the end of the hour in a state of near-panic, trying to think through all the books he'd owned or borrowed since childhood. He felt sick when he realized that when he got to the street, he could be confronted with anybody from Dick and Jane and their dog, Spot, to Teddy Magic from Elmore Leonard's *Glitz*. It was sure going to make life interesting.

He wondered briefly if sex novels were safe. He had a lurid book with pink covers at home, called *The Pit and the Pendulous*. He wouldn't mind meeting the heroine, Nurse Cherry

Pitts. For once, he wouldn't have to worry about what to say to a woman. But Dempsey knew his luck didn't work that way. He was more likely to run into Mildred Rogers from *Of Human Bondage*.

Two days later, after work, Dempsey was having a drink with Mark Morrissey. He decided to tell Morrissey about his experiences. They were standing on the patio of a hotel bar, with a beautiful sunset panorama of the Mississippi River curving away beneath them.

Morrissey was astonished. "You're sure this isn't all your imagination?" he said.

"You were there. You remember that argument with Shelton. You could go right now and look it up in the Hemingway book. I'm not making all this up, Mark. You're a witness."

Morrissey took a swallow of his bourbon and water. "If I grant the episode at Arlina's reception and the one with Shelton, that's twice. That makes a coincidence. I don't know if I'm ready to buy that this has been going on for years, Devin."

"I don't like it either. Who knows, though? Maybe when I was in grade school, I lived through *The Cat in the Hat* or *Little Black Sambo*."

"Or a Plastic Man comic book."

"The trouble is, Mark, that I could still find myself trapped in them. It doesn't seem to make any difference how long ago I read the stuff."

"That's frightening, then."

Dempsey nodded. He was drinking Campari and sod, and he tossed down half of it on one gulp. "How would you like to wake up and find yourself in the middle of something weird like *Gravity's Rainbow* or *Miss Lonelyhearts*?"

"It could be worse," Dempsey raised his eyebrows. "Kafka," Morrissey said simply.

That made Dempsey shiver. "Or something that didn't make any logical sense at all, like *Alice in Wonderland* or some wacko surrealist novel. Something where I couldn't even use my wits to escape. And I never know when it's going to happen next."

Morrissey looked around as though the quiet patio might suddenly turn into a battlefield or an alien landscape. Nothing happened; they were still leaning against the low wall, listening to Muzak versions of pop tunes. Neither man spoke for a while.

Finally, Dempsey said, "I wonder if I'm in real, physical danger."

"I don't know, Devin."

"If I am, I'm putting you in danger, too. Maybe I shouldn't have anything to do with other people from now on."

"You can't live like that. You can't lock yourself away in your house. What are you going to do, have all your groceries delivered? Turn into a crazy old hermit? Get yourself thirty cats for company?"

"I don't know, Mark. I honestly don't know." By now the sun had set, and the stars were beginning to flicker down from the blue-black sky.

"Look!" cried Morrissey suddenly.

In a corner of the patio, standing motionless, staring straight at Dempsey was what was obviously a ghost of an elderly man. Dempsey swallowed hard, blinked his eyes, and looked again. The ghost was still there. Dempsey could see the waving, hazy outlines of Algiers Point and the West Bank through the figure. After the first shock, Dempsey calmed down. He was beginning to accept these intrusions. "I wonder which ghost this is," he said. He drank the last of his Campari and soda.

"It's motioning to you. It wants you to come closer."

"All right. Nothing's going to happen unless I do what it says. You stay here."

"No! You don't have to go with it!"

"It won't say anything to both of us. Anyway, what am I afraid of? The way things are going, if that ghost doesn't carry me off with it, then something else will get me tonight or tomorrow or the next day. What difference does it make? It will be a relief to have all of this over with."

"Listen, Devin—" said Morrissey in desperation, grabbing Dempsey's arm.

Dempsey removed Morrissey's hand. "Let me be. Okay, ghost, I'll go with you."

The ghost led Dempsey from one end of the patio to the other. There was no one else outside except Morrissey, who watched in fear and dismay. The ghost gazed out across the black, rippling river, toward the far shore. "Listen to me," it said in a low, rumbling voice.

"You bet," said Dempsey. He recognized the apparition as the ghost of his father.

"I've got to get back to hell soon, so you better pay attention."

"You got it."

"I'm your father's spirit, doomed to walk the earth restlessly until my crimes are burned away. But if you ever loved me, you must revenge my

foul murder."

"Murder!" murmured Dempsey hoarsely. He'd always believed that his father had died of snakebite.

"Yes, the man who married your mother after my death is responsible. I must be brief. It will be morning soon."

"Morning? It isn't even nine o'clock yet."

The ghost looked at Dempsey pityingly, as if the young man had forgotten the script. "Let me continue. I was sent to my final reckoning without the chance for remorse or repentance. Remember that your mother is innocent, so whatever you do to your



step-father, do not harm her. Leave her to heaven. Goodbye, my son. Goodbye, goodbye." The ghost faded gradually from view. Then, like a distant echo carried on the moist, scented wind, came the words: "Devin, remember me!"

"Devin!" called Morrissey.

"It's all right, Mark. It's over."

"You're shaking. Let me get you another drink."

"No, that's all right. I want to go home. I'll go home and have a lot of drinks."

"It was Act I of *Hamlet*, wasn't it?"

"Yeah. I wonder if I can trust it."

"What do you mean, 'trust it'?"

"The ghost said he was murdered."

"Well, that was just from Shakespeare," said Morrissey.

Dempsey shook his head. "I don't know. Maybe my dad was murdered, too. I don't know how much faith to put in these episodes."

"Let me see that you get home all right. You have a few drinks, take some Valium, get a good night's sleep. We'll talk about it tomorrow."

"Okay. Thanks, Mark."

Morrissey smiled wanly. "I'll go call a cab."

Nothing further happened for a while. Then, on Saturday, Dempsey went for a drive out the River Road, through Destrehan and New Sarpy. About fifty miles from home, his Buick developed a convulsive shudder and an ominous ratchet sound under the hood. The engine died at a traffic light, then died again at a stop sign. When the ratchet sound was joined by a quick, rhythmic thumping, Dempsey began looking for a service station. Before he'd driven another hundred yards, the Buick thumped its last thump. Dempsey managed to guide it off the pavement, under a big blossoming magnolia. He locked the car's doors and began walking along the two-lane blacktop road.

He passed through collections of tarpaper shacks, with a corrugated metal building mixed in now and then, sometimes a small grocery, sometimes a dark and forbidding barroom. Dempsey walked for a long time without coming to a service station. He decided to stop at the next house and ask to use the telephone.

Most of the people Dempsey had seen sitting on their porches along the road had been black, but at the next house he saw an old white woman watching him closely. He turned up her grassy, shell-strewn walk. The woman was wearing a ragged blue bathrobe, with cheap, frayed slippers on her feet. Her gray hair was wound tightly around a mass of pink plastic rollers. The woman's face was haggard and lined. Her bright eyes held all the intelligence and suspicion of a caged bird. Her scrawny arms rested on the weathered arms of a rocking chair and her long, claw-like fingers tapped nervously while she waited for Dempsey to come closer. "How do," she said in a dry, unfriendly voice.

"How are you?" said Dempsey. "My car broke down."

The old woman nodded. Sitting in her rocker, watching traffic go by year after year, she had seen a lot of cars break down.

Dempsey mopped the sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand. Far away down the road, the bright flame of the sun was slipping slowly behind the levee. "Pretty," said Dempsey.

"Does that every evening, long about now."

That's what reminded Dempsey. He knew he'd read that before. He was having another one of his epi-

MAN

sodes, and he knew just what book it was from. The old woman gave it away. He had stepped into a short story by Flannery O'Connor, something he'd had to read in college, a story titled "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." It was about a tramp who comes upon a poor old woman and her idiot daughter. He has his eye on a broken-down car the woman owns. She has her eyes on him, figuring to marry him to her daughter. He works for her a while and fixes up the car. The tramp and the old woman dicker and bargain, and at last he agrees to marry the girl if the old woman will give him some money to take the girl away for a weekend trip in the car. He marries the girl, abandons her in a diner, and drives off with the car and the old woman's money.

Dempsey had some trouble figuring how he fit into such a plot. "How-ever this works out," he muttered, "it isn't going to be pretty."

"What was that?" asked the old woman from her rocker.

"I was wondering if I could use your phone to call a tow-truck."

The old woman's face screwed up as if she was seriously debating both sides of the question. "You can use the phone," she said at last, "but you got to leave me a quarter."

"Sure," said Dempsey. He felt in his pockets, but he didn't have any coins. He looked in his wallet, and the smallest bill he had was a ten.

The old woman's eyes brightened. "Ain't got no change of a ten," she said. She began to cough.

"A phone call isn't worth ten dollars, lady. Couldn't you just let me make one call? I'll give you your quarter when they fix my car."

"I been cheated before," she said. She looked away, toward the cool green levee.

"All right, damn it, take the ten dollars." He threw the money in her lap.

"And you can leave off swearing. You talk filthy like that, I won't let you use my phone no matter how much you give me."

"All right."

The old woman got slowly out of her chair. She started to cough all

over again. She flung open the unpainted screen door and went inside. Dempsey followed. The house was dark and filled with all sorts of battered, worthless furniture. He hurt his shin against a broken recliner. He followed the sound of the old woman as she limped deeper into the house. In the kitchen, the fading light of the sun seeped through windows covered with yellowed newspaper. Just as he expected, a plump, plain younger woman sat at the kitchen table. She looked about thirty years old. She was twisting her hair around her fingers, humming to herself and nodding. A slick line of saliva hung from one corner of

*How could
someone confuse
Flannery O'Connor
and Dostoyevsky?
Maybe if he'd
paid more
attention in
class, none of
this would be
happening.*

her mouth. She grinned placidly at Dempsey.

"Never mind her," said the old woman. "You want to use the phone?"

"Yes," said Dempsey. He watched her put his money in an old leather-covered box.

"Well, I want another dollar."

"You know the smallest I've got is another ten-dollar bill."

"You want to use the phone?"

Dempsey was outraged. Suddenly he hated this greedy, foul-mannered hag. "Give me my money back," he said.

"Make your call," she said, her voice shrill.

"Give me my money back!"

She flew at him and slapped his face. "Get out of my house!" she screeched. "Get out of my house, or I'll yell!"

"Go ahead and yell," said Dempsey furiously. "I'm going to take my ten dollars back."

She ran to her box, to defend her fortune with her life. "I won't have you in my house, you and your filthy mouth." He came toward her, and she picked up a frying pan and held it

threateningly. He brushed it away easily. The old woman struck him again across the face. This time, enraged, Dempsey slapped her just as she had slapped him. The old woman staggered back against the table, a hand to her reddened cheek.

"I want my money," Dempsey said.

"No," said the woman, frightened. She put both hands to her face.

"Give me my ten dollars." He grabbed her and slapped her again. She cried out. He hit her harder, and she fell to the kitchen floor. The young woman watched all this without saying a word. Dempsey knelt beside the old woman. With growing horror, he realized that she was dead. He had killed her, murdered her. His first thought was that this hadn't happened in the O'Connor story. There hadn't been any violence in the O'Connor story. The young woman stood up, afraid now, and began to back away from Dempsey, toward the door. Dempsey knew instantly that he had made a simple mistake: he wasn't in a Flannery O'Connor story, after all; he was in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, which, he had to admit, was very similar in some details. The same stingy old woman, the same witless girl. Still, he thought as he hurried after the young woman, he ought to have recognized it sooner. How could somebody confuse Flannery O'Connor and Dostoyevsky? No wonder his grades hadn't been better. Maybe if he'd paid more attention in class, none of this would be happening. He had to laugh about it, as he strangled the life from the young woman. What would Morrissey say? What would Dr. Foucher say? Dempsey knew he'd look like a real fool now. He let the young woman fall to the linoleum floor. He went back and sat down at the table.

It was no use to run. Dempsey smiled ruefully. No, by morning he'd be caught in the long chapters of *Les Misérables*. He'd have any number of relentless, hardboiled detectives on his trail. No, Dempsey knew, there was no way out. He could only sit and hope that in the morning he'd find himself somewhere clean and bright, where terror never lurked; but the dried grease on the walls and the roaches climbing on the grimy cabinets cast doubts on all that. If only, Dempsey thought as he picked up the telephone, if only he hadn't wasted so much time reading what he had; if only he'd read happy, innocent books. If only he'd never read anything at all.... ■

LEASH

(continued from page 41)

additional work of preparing him for bed, with nothing to show for her efforts except her own increasing fatigue. Her resentment blossomed, flowering fully inside her while she lay at his side, and somehow he sensed it. She would expect him to jump from the bed and he would leap to the floor; she would wait for his shrieks and incoherent babbling and then hear them. She was afraid of her own thoughts, fearful that the undercurrents in her mind were washing over him in spite of everything she did.

His unconscious, it seemed, was not going to let her off so easily. He had enslaved her, had her tied to a leash. She was exhausted by the effort of catering to him in the feeble hope of winning just a few uninterrupted hours of sleep. She had been making more mistakes at the bank and worried that she might finally lose her job. Maybe Ted secretly wanted that; if she were unemployed, she could sleep during the day and have more time to tend to him.

Her experiment ended nine nights after it began, when Ted leaped out of bed, picked up the cassette player emitting the calming sounds of a seashore, and hurled it against the wall.

This can't go on, Carla thought as she crept into the guest bedroom, feeling like a traitor. She had barely enough energy to set the alarm clock before she collapsed on top of the bedspread. She could get up and have Ted's juice ready before he awoke, and he might not notice that she had abandoned him. She no longer cared what he thought about separate bedrooms; it was time for drastic measures.

They could, of course, separate. The problem was that she didn't want to leave him. She still loved him, she supposed; she also did not care to give his mother the chance to say that she had been right about Carla all along. Her enemy wasn't Ted, but whatever was buried inside him; she had to find a way to fight it.

On the other hand, she thought sourly, maybe she was simply going crazy from lack of sleep, was begin-

ning to believe he could pick up every angry, unspoken thought. She curled up, already missing his presence at her side.

Feet pounded down the hall; the door was abruptly flung open. "What?" Ted cried out. Carla sighed; she should have known she wouldn't escape him here. "What's going on?" He leaped toward the bed and hovered over her.

Her mouth was dry, her eyelids gritty; she could barely lift her head. You won't beat me, a voice inside her whispered; I won't let you.

Ted cocked his head, as though listening to someone.

He was struggling against her; she felt him straining at her thoughts. His head jerked, as though she pulled an invisible leash, and then he was still.

You won't make me give up, the voice continued. If you break me, or force me to leave, Ted will deal with you. He'll get depressed, and he'll probably start drinking or taking tranquilizers just to put you in your place. You'll be sorry you ever started this, and he'll begin to hate you. And don't think you can send him after me, either—I'll hide out if I have to. See how you like sending him across town in his sleep.

She was surprised by the forcefulness of this internal voice; it hardly seemed part of her. Go to bed, she thought fiercely, if you know what's good for you.

Ted suddenly turned and left the room.

She recalled what he had said about repressing what was in him, but barely had time to consider that, or to savor her triumph, before falling asleep.

Carla started at the sound of the alarm. She stirred, realizing that she had actually slept. She shut off the alarm before creeping silently down the hall.

Ted lay on their bed with one arm around her pillow. She touched his shoulder. "Ted, wake up." She remembered how he had left her the night before, as if responding to her unspoken command, and shook her head; that had probably been a coincidence.

When she returned with his orange juice, he had actually opened his eyes; he almost seemed alert. He grabbed the juice and drank it in one gulp, then reached for her arm; his brown eyes gleamed. "We've got time," he said. "How about a quickie?"

She was too startled to protest.

Her apprehension returned that night as they were preparing for bed. Ted had been unusually pleasant that evening, had even suggested that he might give up his football game that Saturday to view fall foliage with her and to take her out to dinner. The offer made her suspicious; perhaps his other self was simply setting her up, preparing to retaliate.

But she had a plan of action now. Her suppositions about the cause of his disturbances had seemed ridiculous during the day, but darkness gave them more credibility.

Ted pounded at his pillow, then stretched out next to her. Carla waited until she was sure he was asleep before summoning her thoughts. You'll sleep soundly, she told him silently; you won't be restless, and you are not going to disturb me.

He moaned, as if trying to fight her; she seemed to feel his resistance. You're going to stay still, she thought firmly, or you know what will happen. I won't let you ruin my nights any more, you'll only hurt Ted, and then he'll do something about you. See if he finds anyone else who'll put up with this. It's time you found out who's in command, and it won't be you. Wake me up once more, and I walk.

Ted moaned again, but more softly. He was struggling against her; she felt him straining at her thoughts. Lie still, she ordered. His head jerked, as though she had pulled an invisible leash, and then he was still.

Carla opened her eyes. Ted wasn't next to her. She sat up and noticed that it was nearly time to get out of bed; as she shut off the alarm, Ted walked into the bedroom with a tray.

"Good morning," he said cheerily as he set down the tray next to her. Before she could speak, he had entered the bathroom. She stared at the tray in amazement; he had not only made

juice and coffee, but had provided hot cereal as well.

By the time she had finished her breakfast, Ted was getting dressed. "Good thing I got up early," he said as he buttoned his shirt. "I'll have time to make some notes before I go. Listen—instead of staying home tonight, why don't we go over to the mall and see a movie?"

She blinked. "Are you sure you're feeling all right?"

"Never felt better. Maybe we can go to Chase's after the movie—I heard the new band's pretty good." His brown eyes seemed alert—almost manic, in fact—yet his mouth hung open a little; she had seen similar expressions only when he was sleepwalking or babbling at her in the night. He pulled on his jacket. "Got to make those notes!" He bounded toward the door in a leap that made her think of one of his nocturnal jumps. She suddenly wondered if he was awake at all.

Doubt clouded her mind for only a moment. If Ted were going to sleep peacefully, it was only natural that he would be more lively during the day. Chances were that his problem had disappeared by itself; it was silly to think that she had caused this change.

She picked up the tray and walked down the hall to the kitchen. Ted sat at the counter with a note pad and a mug of coffee. As he looked up at her, she had the feeling that someone else was peering through his eyes. She recalled that he was going to have some sort of meeting today and that he was planning to ask for a raise. It had better go well, she thought idly; we can use the money.

"I'm pretty sure I'll get that raise now," he said, "and we can use the money."

She started, then steadied herself. Something tugged at her mind; she felt herself gripping her mental leash. I've won, she thought. It didn't matter how, as long as they were both happy. She had what she wanted, didn't she?

He bolted up from the counter and grabbed her around the waist, swinging her across the floor with one arm. "Ted!" she cried.

"What?" he responded. "What?" She heard the voice she had listened to so often during the past nights. "I think it's time to cut loose a little, don't you?"

She knew she should feel grateful for the victory, but as she thought of the energetic Ted who was likely to greet her that evening, she was already feeling exhausted. ■

DEVILS

(continued from page 67)

the *malpais* to your house."

"What can I do?" Dolores asks.

"Stop making devils."

"The American wants devils,"

Dolores says.

"Then you will have bad luck."

That afternoon, Dolores makes whistles shaped like doves and owls and coyotes and frogs, simple toys that will make children happy and will bring no devils to her house. As she works, Esperanza plays beside her in the mud, making round balls of clay and patting them flat to make mud tortillas.

When Tomas comes home that evening and examines Dolores' new pottery. There is not a single devil. "The American told you to make devils," he says to her. "Why do you make these toys?"

"I do not like the devils," Dolores tells him softly. "They will bring bad luck."

Tomas scowls. "These devils will bring us money. And money will bring us luck."

She shakes her head. "The *curandera* told me that these clay devils will bring real devils from the *malpais* to our house."

Tomas laughs. It is wicked, hurting laughter with no joy in it. "Why do I have such a stupid wife?" he asks. "There are no devils in the *malpais*. Those are stories to scare children."

Dolores shakes her head again, suddenly stubborn. "I can't make devils," she says. "I..."

Tomas strikes without warning, an open-handed slap that nearly knocks her down. "Why do I have such a stupid wife?" he shouts. "The American wants devils and you will make devils." When he strikes her again, Dolores falls to her knees and clutches her head, weeping. He stands over her for a moment, his hand raised as if to strike again. When she looks up at him, he scowls at her, the expression of a young boy who has been denied something he wants. "You must make devils," he says. "Then we will have money, and we can buy you a new dress." Reluctantly, she nods her head. Then he tells her to dry her tears and helps her to her feet. ■

That night, Tomas drinks with his friends, finishing the tequila that he bought with the American's money. Dolores dreams of a bat-winged devil who dances on a platform of human skulls, a feathered devil who clutches two weeping children in its talons; a snake devil who has caught a naked woman in his coils.

The next morning, Dolores makes devils: the snake with the captive woman; the bat-winged dancer; the bird devil and the children. Her head aches and she is weary before the day is half over.

When Tomas comes home, he sees her work and smiles. "These will bring money," he says, but she does not answer. He puts them on the shelf with the others and, because there is no more tequila, his friends do not come to visit. He sits alone on the rusting car and drowns in the setting sun. Dolores watches from the kitchen door; she does not like seeing him sitting so near the *malpais* when the night is coming. She goes to him. "Come in the house," she says. "It is not good to be out here."

He smiles, and his face looks unfamiliar in the red light of sunset. "You shouldn't fear the devils," he says. "The devils will make us rich. The devils will buy you new dresses and build us a new house."

She takes his hand and he follows her into the house, obedient as a sleepwalker. They go to bed and he sleeps; Esperanza sleeps. And Dolores hears whispering.

"Dolores," they say. "We will make you strong. We will give you money. We will give you power." Tiny voices, dry as the wind from the desert. "Listen to us."

Tomas turns in his sleep, and Dolores hears him moan softly, as if crying out in a dream. He is a weak man, susceptible to the devils' promises. They have promised him riches, then tempted him with drink. He is weak, but she is strong. She hears the whispering voices, but she does not listen.

In the faint light of early dawn Dolores leaves her bed and carries the devils out to the edge of the *malpais*. She lines them up side by side on the hood of the old car. They stare at her with bulging eyes, threaten her with their claws.

She takes a large stick from the ground and clubs the snake devil who holds the woman captive, smashing the unfired clay into pieces. The light of the sun warms her as she lifts her club to strike again. ■

RUMMAGE S A L E

(continued from page 61)

"Name?"

And then I recognized the smell and looked up to see Della looming stolidly before me. I glanced out the side window and saw that, sure enough, the sun had set.

"Hi, Del! Listen, go on in if you want to. I think you're down to work with the snack crew, aren't you? I think you're a little early, but ... Della?"

She had already hurried around the corner, into the main room. I had been surprised to see her out of my basement—she didn't usually leave till I came for her. But I felt really apprehensive seeing her hurry like that. I'd never seen her move faster than a slow, thudding shuffle.

And then I heard the first scream.

By the time I made it the twenty feet into the room myself, Della was yanking on a rubber transfusion tube while the needle it was attached to ripped through Jack Smasal's arm. Three or four plastic plasma sacks lay empty, drained and thrown aside, while blood poured from people's veins onto the white linoleum tiles of the floor. One gray-faced woman stared in horror as her dress blotted up the bright red of her own open vein.

"Della!" I cried, and she stopped stock still where she was, lowering her mouth to suck the throbbing wound above Jack Smasal's elbow.

"Della, I said you were on the snack crew. That mean you're in charge of serving snacks to the donors after they've given blood, not finding snacks for yourself!"

She looked at me, blood oozing through her teeth, her eyes glazed as usual and her make-up putty grotesquely askew. And one slow tear found its way down her cheek.

"Oh, Della," I whispered, putting my arms around her sharp shoulders. "I'm so sorry."

After that, of course, we had to put Della back.

Not that there weren't plenty of people who tried to talk us out of it. A committee from the Community Betterment Club, for instance, came to us and begged us to lend them Della for a year before we reinterred her.

But we stood firm. They, like us, would have to find a president from among the living, like it or not.

On the night of the spring solstice we gathered—Jackie, Pam, Theresa, and I—to read the ritual that would send Della back through the dimensions, past the barriers, to peace.

I even decided to spring for real lamb this time, in spite of the fact that it was outrageously priced at Foodway. We didn't want to take any chances with where we sent Della, and besides, after we'd smeared the blood on our face we gave her the meat as a last meal to show our appreciation.

"Goodbye, Della," Pam said as we

She looked at me, blood oozing through her teeth, her eyes glazed as usual, and her makeup putty grotesquely askew. One slow tear made its way down her cheek.

all stood looking down into the grave. The moon sailed by, and Della looked younger somehow lying there, more relaxed. "We'll miss you."

And then all of us took a handful of dirt and dropped it into the grave, then threw in the dafodils we'd picked earlier at Theresa's. Della slowly moved one hand and gathered them to her chest.

Jackie raised the book and began to read.

"... and get ye therefore back from whenceforth ye came, past the boundaries that encompass the realm of day ..."

"... that encompass the realm of day ..." we all repeated, sniffing.

And the moon scuttled under a cloud, and the ground shook, and all the dirt heaved back onto Della's grave, sealing us from her, this time probably forever.

It came in the back door of the gymnasium while Jackie and Mary Alice and I were handling the marking table gain. It was wearing the same tacky black flowing thing it had had on the year before.

"But we shouldn't hold that against it," Mary Alice whispered in my ear, reading my mind as we stood trying to stare discreetly. "After all, I've had this t-shirt for seven years, and you've worn those old Nikes forever."

It glided to our table and deposited a slimy grocery sack, which was smoldering around the edges.

"Uh, listen, don't you want to take back this book?" I asked it quickly, fumbling under the table. "You brought it to us last year, and I'm sure we won't be using it anymore."

It stopped in its glide to half-turn back toward me, then raised one black-clad arm. The book of incantations flew from my hand and flapped across the room to disappear into the folds of its cloak. Then it was gone. We'd been careful not to put the flower table where it would pass this year.

At that moment, watching it seemingly vaporize into bright sunshine outside the gymnasium door, I felt an overpowering sadness pass through me.

"Well, the book's gone. Now we're on our own. We'll positively never have Della again."

"Oh, cheer up," said Mary Alice, with the maddening perkiness of a person who has never had to serve on a nominating committee. "She was only a zombie, after all. Surely she's not going to be so impossible to replace."

Jackie and I looked at each other and rolled our eyes, dreading fall already.

"If only she hadn't had those disgusting eating habits," murmured Jackie. "If only she'd been a little less ... well ... earthy, she'd have been the answer to all our problems. I'd positively sell my soul for someone just like her only more socially acceptable. You know, someone a little quicker, a little sharper ... maybe a little flashier."

The sack had been burning beside us unnoticed during this reverie, and now Mary Alice glanced over and started bashing at the smoking remains with a nearby stuffed dinosaur.

"Oh, no, we just let a pile of romances burn up!" she wailed.

I stepped closer and poked through the charred mass with the end of my marking pen. There was a heavy book with a metal seal still intact under the ashes. I used the tail of Jackie's t-shirt to wipe away the grime from the title.

"*Spells for Bidding Forth Demons from the Dimension of the Old Ones*," I read. "Either of you guys interested in that?" ■

OTHER SIDE

(continued from page 30)

the figure that pranced out of the ruins.

At first he thought its face was white with dust. It sidled about in front of the jagged foundations, pumping its hips and pretending to stick an invisible needle in its arm, and then Bowring saw that the face wasn't covered with dust; it was made up like a clown's. That and the mime looked doubly incongruous because of the plain suit the man was wearing. Perhaps all this was some kind of street theater, some anarchist nonsense of the kind that tried to make the world a stage for its slogans, yet Bowring had a sudden disconcerting impression that the mime was meant just for him. He blocked the idea from his mind—it felt like a total loss of control—and turned his back on the window.

His morning routine calmed him, his clothes laid out on the sofa as his mother used to do. His breakfast egg waiting on the molded ledge in the door of the refrigerator, where he'd moved it last night from the egg box farther in. That evening he attended a debate at the Conservative club on law and order, and on Sunday he drove into the countryside to watch patterns of birds in the sky. By Sunday evening he hadn't given the far side of the river more than a casual glance for over twenty-four hours.

When he glimpsed movement, insect-like under the mercury lamp, he sat down to listen to Elgar. But he resented feeling as if he couldn't look; he'd enjoyed the view across the river ever since he'd moved across, enjoyed knowing it was separate from him. He took as much time as he could over carrying his binoculars to the window.

The clown was capering under the lamp, waving his fists exultantly above his head. His glee made Bowring nervous about discovering its cause. Nervousness swung the binoculars wide, and he saw Darren lying among the fallen bricks, clutching his head and writhing. At once the clown scampered off into the dark.

In the false perspective of the lenses Darren looked unreal, and Bowring felt a hint of guilty triumph. No doubt the boy had been taunting the clown—maybe now he'd had a bit

of sense knocked into him. He watched the boy crawl out of the debris and stagger homewards, and was almost certain that it had been Darren's voice on the phone. He was even more convinced on Monday morning, by the way that all Darren's cronies sitting round the empty desk stared accusingly at him.

They needn't try to blame him for Darren's injury, however just it seemed. "If anyone has anything to say about any of your absent colleagues," he murmured, "I'm all ears." Of course they wouldn't speak to him face to face, he realized, not now that they had his number. His face stiffened

*The face was
white as a clown's,
the hands gloved,
the shoulders
miming rage. Then
the figure began
to prance wildly,
waving its fists
above its spiky
hair.*

so much he could barely conduct the lesson, which they seemed even less eager to comprehend than usual. No doubt they were anticipating unemployment and the freedom to do mischief all day, every day. Their apathy made him feel he was drowning, fighting his way to a surface which perhaps no longer existed. When he drove home across the bridge, their sullen sunless sky came with him.

As soon as he was home he reached out to take the phone off the hook, until he grabbed his wrist with his other hand. This time he'd be ready for them if they called. Halfway through his dinner of unfrozen cod, they did. He saw them before he heard them, three of them slithering down the steep slope to a phone box, miraculously intact, that stood near a riverside terrace that had escaped demolition. He dragged them toward him with the binoculars as they piled into the box.

They were three of his girls: Debbie, who he'd seen holding hands with Darren—he didn't like to wonder what they got up to when nobody could see them—and Vanessa and Germaine. He

watched Debbie as she dialed, and couldn't help starting as his phone rang. Then he grinned across the river at her. Let her do her worst to reach him.

He watched the girls grimace in the small lit box, shouting threats or insults or obscenities at the phone in Debbie's hand as if that would make him respond. "Shout all you like, you're not in my classroom now," he whispered, and then, without quite knowing why, he swung the binoculars away from them to survey the dark. As his vision swept along the top of the slope he saw movement, larger than he was expecting. A chunk of rubble half as high as a man was poised on the edge above the telephone box. Behind it, grinning stiffly, he saw the glimmering face of the clown.

Bowring snatched up the receiver without thinking. "Look out! Get out!" he cried, so shrilly that his face stiffened with embarrassment. He heard Debbie sputter a shocked insult as the binoculars fastened shakily on the lit box, and then she dropped the receiver as Vanessa and Germaine, who must have seen the danger, fought to be first out of the trap. The box shook with their struggles, and Bowring yelled at them to be orderly, as if his voice might reach them through the dangling receiver. Then Vanessa wrenched herself free, and the others followed, almost falling headlong, as the rubble smashed one side of the box, filling the interior with knives of glass.

Maybe that would give them something to think about, but all the same, it was vandalism. Shouldn't Bowring call the police? Some instinct prevented him, perhaps his sense of wanting to preserve a distance between himself and what he'd seen. After all, the girls might have seen the culprit too, might even have recognized him.

But on Tuesday they were pretending that nothing had happened. Debbie's blank face challenged him to accuse her, to admit he'd been watching. Her whole stance challenged him, her long legs crossed, her linen skirt ending high on her bare thighs. How dare she sit like that in front of a man of his age! She'd come to grief acting like that, but not from him. The day's problems squealed on the blackboard, the chalk snapped.

He drove home, his face stiff with resentment. He wished he hadn't picked up the phone, wished he'd left them at the mercy of the madman who, for all Bowring knew, had gone mad as a re-

sult of their kind of misbehavior. As he swung the car onto the drive below his flat, a raw sunset throbbled in the gap where the tenement had been.

The sun went down. Lamps pricked the dark across the river. Tonight he wouldn't look, he told himself, but he couldn't put the other side out of his mind. He ate lamb chops to the strains of one of Rossini's pre-adolescent sonatas. Would there ever be prodigies like him again? Children now were nothing like they used to be. Bowring carried the radio to his chair beside the fire, and couldn't help glancing across the river. Someone was loitering in front of the gap where the tenement had been.

He sat down, stood up furiously, grabbed the binoculars. It was Debbie, waiting under the mercury lamp. She wore a pale blue skirt now, and stockings. Her lipstick glinted. She reminded Bowring of streetwalker in some film, that image of a woman standing under a lamp surrounded by darkness.

No doubt she was waiting for Darren. Women waiting under lamps often came to no good, especially if they were up to none. Bowring probed the dark with his binoculars, until his flattened gaze came to rest on a fragment of the tenement, a zigzag of wall as high as a man. Had something pale just dodged behind it?

Debbie was still under the lamp, hugging herself against the cold, glancing nervously over her shoulder, but not at the fragment of wall. Bowring turned the lenses back to the wall, and came face to face with the clown, who seemed to be grinning straight at him from his hiding-place. The sight froze Bowring, who could only cling shakily to the binoculars and watch as the white face dodged back and forth, popping out from opposite edges of a wall. Perhaps only a few seconds passed, but it seemed long as a nightmare before the clown leapt on the girl.

Bowring saw her thrown flat on the scorched ground, saw the clown stuff her mouth with a wad of litter, the grinning white face pressing into hers. When the clown pinned her wrists with one hand and began to tear at her clothes with the other, Bowring grabbed the phone. He called the police station near the school and waited feverishly while the clown shielded Debbie's clothes into the dark. "Rape. Taking place now, where the tenement was demolished," he gasped as soon as he heard a voice.

"Were you calling from, sir?"

"That doesn't matter. You're wast-

ing time. Unless you catch this person in the act you may not be able to identify him. He's made up like a clown."

"What is your name, please, sir?"

"What the devil has my name to do with it? Just go to the crime, can't you? There, you see," Bowring cried, his voice out of control, "you're too late."

Somehow Debbie had struggled free and was limping naked toward the nearest houses. Bowring saw her look back in terror, then flee painfully across the rubble. But the clown wasn't following, he was merely waving the baggy crotch of his trousers at her. "I



need your name before we're able to respond," the voice said brusquely in Bowring's ear, and Bowring dropped the receiver in his haste to break the connection. When he looked across the river again, both Debbie and the clown had gone.

Eventually he saw police cars cruising back and forth past the ruined tenement, policemen tramping from house to house. Bowring had switched off his light in order to watch and for fear that the police might notice him, try to involve him, make an issue of his having refused to name himself.

He watched for hours as front door after front door opened to the police. He was growing more nervous, presumably in anticipation of the sight of the clown, prancing through a doorway or being dragged out by the police.

Rain came sweeping along the river, drenching the far bank. The last houses closed behind the police. A police car probed the area around the ruined tenement with its headlights, and then there was only rain and

darkness and the few drowning street-lamps. Yet he felt as if he couldn't stop watching. His vision swam jerkily toward the charred gap, and the clown pranced out from behind the jagged wall.

How could the police have overlooked him? But there he was, capering beside the ruin. As Bowring leaned forward, clutching the binoculars, the clown reached behind the wall and produced an object which he brandished gleefully. He dropped it back into hiding just as Bowring saw that it was an axe. Then the clown minced into the lamplight.

For a moment, Bowring thought that the clown's face was injured—distorted, certainly—until he realized that the rain was washing the makeup off. Why should that make him even more nervous? He couldn't see the face now, for the clown was putting his fists to his eyes. He seemed to be peering through his improvised binoculars straight at Bowring—and then, with a shock that stiffened his face, Bowring was sure that he was. The next moment the clown turned his bare face up to the rain that streamed through the icy light.

Makeup began to whiten his lapels like droppings on a statue. The undisguised face gleamed in the rain. Bowring stared at the face that was appearing, then he muttered a denial to himself as he struggled to lower the binoculars, to let go his shivering grip on them, look away. Then the face across the river grinned straight at him, and his convulsion heaved him away from the window with a violence that meant to refute what he'd seen.

It couldn't be true. If it was, anything could be. He was hardly aware of lurching downstairs and into the sharp rain, binoculars thumping his chest. He fumbled his way into the car and sent it slewing toward the road, wipers scything at the rain. As trees crowded into the headlights, the piny smell made him swim.

The struts of the bridge whirled by, dripping. Dark streets, broken lamps, decrepit streaming houses closed round him. He drove faster through the desertion, though he felt as if he'd given in to a loss of control; surely there would be nothing to see—perhaps there never had been. But when the car skidded across the mud beside the demolished tenement, the clown was waiting bare-faced for him.

Bowring wrenched the car to a slithering halt and leapt out into the mud in front of the figure beneath the

OTHER SIDE

lamp. It was a mirror, he thought desperately: he was dreaming of a mirror. He felt the rain soak his clothes, slash his cheeks, trickle inside his collar. "What do you mean by this?" he yelled at the lamplit figure, and before he could think of what he was demanding, "Who do you think you are?"

The figure lifted its hands toward its face, still whitewashed by the mercury lamp, then spread its hands toward Bowring. That was more than Bowring could bear, both the silence of the miming and what the gesture meant to say. His mind emptied as he lurched past the lamplight to the fragment of tenement wall.

When the figure didn't move to stop him, he thought the axe wouldn't be there. But it was. He snatched it up and turned on the other, who stepped toward him, out of the lamplight. Bowring lifted the axe defensively. Then he saw that the figure was gesturing toward itself, miming an invitation. Bowring's control broke, and he swung the axe toward the unbearable sight of the grinning face.

At the last moment, the figure jerked its head aside. The axe cut deep into its neck. There was no blood, only a bulging of what looked like new pale flesh from the wound. The figure staggered, then mimed the axe toward itself again. None of this could be happening, Bowring told himself wildly; it was too outrageous, it meant that anything could happen, it was the beginning of total chaos. His incredulity let him hack with the axe, again and again, his binoculars bruising his ribs. He hardly felt the blows he was dealing, and when he'd finished there was still no blood, only an enormous sprawl of torn cloth and chopped pink flesh whitened by the lamplight, restless with rain. Somehow the head had survived his onslaught, which had grown desperately haphazard. As Bowring stared appalled at it, the grinning face looked straight at him, and winked. Screaming under his breath, Bowring hacked it in half, then went on chopping, chopping, chopping.

When at last exhaustion stopped him he made to fling the axe into the ruins. Then he clutched it and reeled

back to his car, losing his balance in the mud, almost falling into the midst of his butchery. He drove back to the bridge, his eyes bulging at the liquid dark, at the roads overflowing their banks, the fleets of derelict houses sailing by. As he crossed the bridge, he flung the axe into the river.

He twisted the key and groped blindly into his house, felt his way upstairs, peeled off his soaked clothes, lowered himself shakily into a hot bath. He felt exhausted, empty, but was unable to sleep. He couldn't really have crossed the river, he told himself over and over; he couldn't have done what he remembered doing, the mem-



ory that filled his mind, brighter than the streetlamp by the ruin.

He stumbled naked to the window. Something pale lay beside the streetlamp, but he couldn't make it out; the rain had washed the lenses clean of the coating that would have let him see more in the dark. He sat there shivering until dawn, nodding occasionally, jerking awake with a cry. When the sunlight reached the other side, the binoculars showed him that the ground beside the lamp was bare.

He dragged on crumpled clothes, tried to eat breakfast but spat out the mouthful, fled to his car. He never set out so early, but today he wanted to be in his classroom as soon as he could, where he still had control. Rainbows winked at him from trees as he drove, and then the houses gaped at him. As yet the streets were almost deserted, and so he couldn't resist driving by the tenement before making for the school. He parked at the top of the slope, craned his neck as he stood shivering on the pavement, and then, more and more shakily and re-

luctantly, he picked his way down the slope. He'd seen movement in the ruin.

They must be young animals, he told himself as he slithered down. Rats, perhaps, or something else newborn—nothing else could be so pink or move so oddly. He slid down to the low jagged gappy well. As he caught hold of the topmost bricks, which shifted under his hands, all the pink shapes amid the rubble raised their faces, his face, to him.

Some of the lumps of flesh had recognizable limbs, or at least portions of them. Some had none, no features at all except one or more of the grimacing faces, but all of them came swarming toward him as best they could. Bowring reeled, choked, flailed his hands, tried to grab at reality, wherever it was. He fell across the wall, twisting, face up. At once a hand with his face sprouting from its wrist scuttled up his body and closed its fingers, his fingers, about his throat.

Bowring cowered into himself, desperate to hide from the sensation of misshapen crawling all over his body, his faces swarming over him, onto his limbs, between his legs. There was no refuge. A convulsion shuddered through him, jerked his head up wildly, "My face," he shrieked in a choked whisper, and sank his teeth into the wrist of the hand that was choking him.

It had no bones to speak of. Apart from its bloodlessness, it tasted like raw meat. He shoved it into his mouth, stuffed the fingers in and then the head. As it went in it seemed to shrink, grow shapeless, though he felt his teeth close on its eyes. "My face," he spluttered, and reached for handfuls of the rest. But while he'd been occupied with chewing, the swarming had left his body. He was lying alone on the charred rubble.

They were still out there somewhere, he knew. He had to get them back inside himself, he mustn't leave them at large on this side of the river. This side was nothing to do with him. He swayed to his feet and saw the school. A grin stiffened his mouth. Of course, that was where they must be, under the faces of his pupils, but not for long. The children couldn't really be as unlike him as they seemed; nothing could be that alien—that was how they'd almost fooled him. He made his way toward the school, grinning, and as he thought of pulling off those masks to find his face, he began to dance. ■

IMAGE

(continued from page 31)

Practical. Windmills. Reality. It happens.

"Robert," she said. "Robert, please open the door."

He filled the basin with lukewarm water and splashed it on his face, looked up at his dripping reflection and could no longer see the tears.

"Idiot," he whispered.

The shattered face stared back, eyes narrow, lips tight, and he nearly laughed at the parody of anger he

saw, reminding himself that even Scrooge had probably compromised a little the day after he had given over the free Christmas goose.

"Robert, come on, we have to talk. I'm sorry."

He knew she was sincere, that she wasn't lurking out there with a knife behind her back or a club in her hand; he knew that weeping for Tiny Tim wasn't the same as weeping for the man who lived in a cardboard box. He knew that now. Perhaps he hadn't known it before. Perhaps, in telling her over the last few months what he wanted to do if he ever got the nerve, he hadn't seen the response in her eyes, in the way she held him, in the way her hands clasped together, knuckles white while lips were smil-

ing. Perhaps ...

He reached for the doorknob and looked at himself in the mirror.

Jesus, he thought with a quiet laugh and shake of his head, it's a wonder I don't cut my head off every morning.

He laughed again, a bit louder, and told Joann not to worry, she'd scared him but he was fine.

She giggled and rattled the knob. "Open up," she said. "I think I'm ready."

"So am I," he told the face that looked at him with regret. "And the first thing in the morning I'm going to give you a new look, one that won't scare me awake."

"Robert?"

He turned the knob.

And his reflection reached out and tore a hole in his throat. ■

THE HORROR SHOW

AN ADVENTURE IN TERROR

Are you subscribing to *The Horror Show*? If not, there may never be a better time! Our January 1987 issue is a J.K. Potter special! Right smack dab in the middle, you'll find a four page insert of Potter's bizarre illustrations, all set to pull out and hang on your wall. Plus interviews with Potter and Joe R. Lansdale, great fiction, informative columns, book and movie reviews, and much more. Our last summer issue was a Dean R. Koontz bonanza! Including an indepth interview, a special Koontz story written exclusively for *Horror Show* readers, plus a bit of weird Koontz humor. And in our Fall issue we focused on the unique approach of Steve Rasnic Tem to his fiction. Every issue is something special!

But we've got more than just a great magazine, we've got a great deal! With your subscription to *The Horror Show* we'll send you free coupons for other discounts and freebies which will save you more than the price of your subscription! You'll receive a free issue of *Scavenger's Newsletter*, the *Horror Writers of America Newsletter*, a free catalogue from Weinberg Books, plus discounts on *Fantasy Book*, *Space and Time*, *Haunted Castles*, *Footsteps*, and others! All for your 1 year subscription to *The Horror Show*! But there's more! If you subscribe for two years, we'll send you everything above, plus an extra issue of *The Horror Show* and a free issue of *Fantasy Review*! This is an offer you can't beat anywhere. So come join us for the best in contemporary horror, *The Horror Show*!



"THE HORROR SHOW is exactly what the genre needs. Good fiction, good criticism, all attractively packaged. I wouldn't miss an issue."

Dean R. Koontz

"If you like reading this magazine, you're guaranteed to enjoy THE HORROR SHOW. Let me give you one word of advice — subscribe!"

Robert Moch

"THE HORROR SHOW is a great place to catch new and upcoming talent as well as established authors. THE HORROR SHOW is fresh, new and definitely a chiller!"

Robert R. McCammon

THE HORROR SHOW

14848 Misty Springs Lane, Oak Run, CA 96069

Dean Koontz Special - \$4.95
Steve Rasnic Tem Special - \$4.95
J.K. Potter Special - \$4.95
Regular Subscription (Coupons) - \$14.00
Can't Get Enough (Coupons + bonus) - \$26.00

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

STATE: _____

ZIP: _____

Foreign orders add \$2.00, payable in U.S. funds. Foreign orders should be made out to David Silva. Please allow 6-8 weeks.

RAMSEY CAMPBELL

(continued from page 32)

CAMPBELL: Fine! Fine! I don't want any competition with myself—why are you asking me such a question! [Laughs.] No, I suppose there aren't any direct imitations, though I think there are folk who have taken bits and pieces. Now, I hope he's not going to come after me when he reads this, but I thought Doug Winter's "Masks" in Charlie Grant's *Midnight* anthology read very oddly like a collaboration between me and Stephen King! There are elements in it where I thought that I would have done it that way, at any rate. I think there was some influence during the period of *Demons by Daylight*, though I suspect a lot of writers said, "Well, why isn't he writing the way he was in *The Doll Who Ate His Mother?*" I do occasionally think that people feel a little bit cheated because the next book is not quite like the one I wrote before. As far as I'm concerned, the whole business of writing is a process of trying to do things you didn't do last time! Of trying to get right what you didn't do last time. I've been progressing in various directions of late. I mean, *Obsession* probably didn't read very much like the stories in *Demons by Daylight* at all!

WIATER: So true. With *Obsession*, if it had been written under a pseudonym, it might have not been readily recognized as being one of your novels. Yet 1983's *The Night of the Claw* was not only immediately recognizable as your work, it was also published under the most obvious pseudonym imaginable: "Jay Ramsey." Why?

CAMPBELL: Macmillan had bought several books—*The Parasite*, *The Nameless*, *Dark Companions*—so it seemed reasonable to give them some breathing space. As it happened, Macmillan didn't publish my other books as quickly as I'd anticipated, and I could have published *Incarinate* as well at the time without putting *Claw* out under a pseudonym. It was simply that.

WIATER: You made your initial reputation as a writer of short stories, yet now work primarily as a novelist. Is it any easier to write successful horror novels than it is short stories?

CAMPBELL: It's certainly easier writing novels now than it was when I first started; I'd rather write a novel than a short story these days. I sup-

pose *The Nameless* was the point of transition when I got it together. Since then, I've gotten control of the technique of writing a novel. Now I don't tend to have a preconceived plot, whereas before, even with a short story, I would have a pretty clear idea of its structure and point of view. But I was a bit afraid of finding myself halfway through a novel and discovering I didn't know where the hell I was going next! Of course, that does happen, but I now find it interesting simply to find out where the novel is going. I mean, novels actually do go on their own momentum, and really build their own structures. I think if

CAMPBELL: "I get delighted when I create something that's pretty terrible. I'm likely to think: Oh, that's hideous! My God! Let's put that in!"

you can take that risk of not conceiving everything in advance, the novel actually becomes very organic, and I find that very satisfying. Short stories are something I do in between novels now.

WIATER: When we first met several years ago, you were writing everything out in longhand. Any chance you've purchased your first word processor since then?

CAMPBELL: No, I don't use those things! I always write in longhand first—I write on the right-hand side of a notebook, you see. I leave the left side blank so I can revise there. The main revision is then done on the typewriter. I actually do get into an entirely different frame of mind when I'm typing fiction. Anyway, with immense delight I then start hacking out great chunks of the book, throwing away days of work, which is one of the great pleasures of writing! [Laughs.] I think with a word processor those two processes wouldn't be so separate, and I think it works quite well for them to be separate. So I've never been tempted. We live in a very big house now, and I have a room

that faces the dawn, with a view across the river to Liverpool. So I go up there at about seven a.m. with a large pot of tea which wakes me up, and I get on with it, basically. It goes on to about noon, even later sometimes. I do that seven days a week with any work of fiction until it's finished.

WIATER: Your work is highly respected in the States. But is the critical reaction to horror fiction any different in your native country?

CAMPBELL: No, not on the whole. But in a larger sense, horror fiction doesn't get much criticism; that is, it doesn't get much notice at all in England. Largely because—as is the case with most genres—you're actually competing with the worst in the field. You're all sort of stuck together there on the bookstore shelf. I'm inclined to favor the American method, where it's usually just there amidst the rest of the fiction. In England, you tend in the larger stores to find a "Horror" shelf. Which means you have a Clive Barker, and Straub, and King, and Robert Aickman, alongside *Slugs* and *Crabs* and *Pus*.

And they're all competing with each other in terms of packaging as well, to some extent. Unfortunately, book distribution in England is largely in the hands of only two distributors, and if you don't get them, you don't get anywhere! I happen to know that one of them, W.H. Smith, gave *The Nameless* their lowest rating in terms of sales, and once they do that and it goes on the computer, storeowners will say, "We don't want that" when the salesmen come around to their stores. So, basically, you're... screwed! Why that situation should be, I have no idea.

WIATER: Considering the stories we heard of bookstores in England being raided from time to time, with horror literature being pulled along with the so-called pornographic material, did you ever have censorship problems with your own work?

CAMPBELL: Well, *The Face That Must Die* certainly had problems at the outset. People said it was too grim, and too relentless. Eventually Star Books published it, but in a truncated version. I think publishers were particularly disconcerted with the way the book came on at the outset—it hits the reader at once instead of guiding him in a little bit. So I perhaps wouldn't do it quite that way now. On the other hand, I don't think if I were to make the characters more palatable, that that would in any way

improve the book. I think it's least successful when it's trying to be a conventional "thriller." And to make the victims more sympathetic... it's probably not in any way relevant to what the book is about. But now that people are reading it, I'm stunned how I did it in the first place.

WIATER: Recently we reread some of your work, and were surprised how in several instances it has been revised. That's certainly uncommon, isn't it? CAMPBELL: Well, John Brunner's done it, and Robert Silverberg has, hasn't he? But usually my revisions are very minor, just matters of style—a sentence will later look kind of clumsy to me, and I'll try to tighten it up a bit. Several of the stories in *Dark Companions* were lightly revised. The story "The Companion," for instance, comes on a bit too strong at the start, and it's overwritten in the first few opening pages, so I did try and tone that down a little bit. With *The Face That Must Die* I took out one chapter from the protagonist's point of view, but that was my decision. Star Books also took out several paragraphs that were nearly all from the viewpoint of Horridge. They tended to be these strange convoluted puns that he made to himself, that I really felt was part of the character. So I put them back in when the restored version came out. With [the American paperbacks of] *The Doll Who Ate His Mother*, *The Nameless*, and *The Parasite*, it was a case of writing alternative chapters because I didn't think the chapters in the original versions really quite worked. It was simply a question of trying to improve them.

WIATER: There's always the argument that true horror writers are "born," not "made." What advice would you give to someone who is a devout fan of horror fiction, and thinks he may have it in him to write it as well?

CAMPBELL: Well, if you read it, you presumably have got a feeling for the genre, and to that extent you probably are "born" to it. So if you have a sensitivity toward the field—put it this way, you don't have to have had a childhood like mine to write horror fiction! [Laughs.] Clive Barker had a perfectly normal childhood, so he tells me. Well, you can believe him if you like!

WIATER: We're relieved you yourself brought up the point about your childhood in terms of being a "born" horror writer. Without making too much of the cliché, the introduction to the restored *The Face That Must Die* revealed a most disquieting skeleton in your closet.

CAMPBELL: Hmm... there must be a few others like myself, though they may all be just like Clive Barker. I suspect M.R. James was a pretty normal guy.... On the other hand, people like Robert Aickman had a very strange childhood.

WIATER: From past interviews, we know you had more or less concocted a typical "writer's childhood" for those who asked you the terribly clichéd "Did you have a warped childhood?" as the reason for becoming a horror writer. Why did you finally tell the world, "Yes, I genuinely did have a warped childhood?"

CAMPBELL: For a variety of reasons.



Perhaps the obvious one is that I was able to talk about it at last once my mother died. It was also to put the novel into a kind of context, because a lot of people had said, "How could you write such a book?" Initially, it was meant only for the hardcore fan, because the introduction was first published in a small press book, and I didn't consider at the time that my American paperback publisher, Tor Books, would ever do this terrific paperback edition. I mean to see it in places like Ralph's Supermarket—my God! So a lot of people are going to be in for a strange experience when they take this home and think it's another Guy N. Smith novel, I'll tell you! Seriously, I wrote it because I was able to talk about my childhood at last, really. It was the most difficult thing I ever wrote, but I think it was worth writing.

WIATER: In terms of 20/20 hindsight, that introduction certainly sheds a whole new light on much of purposely oblique always shifting "shadows" that are a trademark of your writing.

CAMPBELL: Yes, to that extent, I thought it was the legitimate thing to

do—to give people that insight. If I didn't do it, nobody else was going to do it, so there you go.

WIATER: But critics have always referred to you as an exceedingly "grim" writer, haven't they? Peter Straub has said that "the world Ramsey Campbell takes for granted is the world of our darkest nightmares." CAMPBELL: [In a monster's voice] Aggh! You should meet me as a human being! But it's strange, isn't it? I suppose I'm able to go into the darkness inside my head, going into those corners where these things are always creeping out.... It's funny; I suppose you're right.... But a lot of my grimness is simply as a sort of social commentary—in *The Nameless* for example, if you take out all the mention of noise pollution, and how terrible it is to live in the city, you actually take out a large support of the plot.

WIATER: Charles Grant has for some time now been espousing his theory of "Quiet Horror." Briefly, it would seem to be the type of horror fiction not usually attempted by the writers of such novels as *Crabs* or *Pus*. Of course, a great deal of your work could be classified as quiet horror—it's often low-key, suggestive, understated. Is that something you consciously prefer?

CAMPBELL: I think that "Quiet Horror"—subtlety—is a great thing, though I think it can coexist with other styles. It certainly shows up in my work. I think what Charlie is up to is more that classic principle of showing just enough in order to suggest a great deal more. It's common to Lovecraft, to Machen, to Aickman, and a whole lot of good people in this field. I mean, there are two completely different kinds of horror: first, the "technicolor" kind of horror, and the other is the sort of grainy black and white kind. Like those old Val Lewton films, which Charlie takes as his ideal. Mine too! Lewton's films were quite wonderful, and have never been equalled.

WIATER: Does that mean you occasionally censor your own work, to keep it from becoming to overtly gruesome?

CAMPBELL: No, no! I certainly don't say, "This is too gruesome." I don't often say, "This isn't gruesome enough," because I usually hit it first time around, as far as I'm concerned. I'm much more likely to think to myself, "Oh, that's hideous! My God! Let's put that in!" I get delighted when I create something that's pretty

RAMSEY CAMPBELL

terrible.

WIATER: When you're working as an anthologist, what critical standards do you go by?

CAMPBELL: Only that it should disturb me in some way—that's what I like to find. Or somehow astonish me.

WIATER: Are there any writers who can still scare you?

CAMPBELL: Oh, yes! Robert Aickman, for a start. Things that he has written have stayed with me for days; he is the writer in the field who I most reread. I'm always learning something new the next time around. But Stephen King, of course—I'll always remember that scene in Room 217 in *The Shining*. And Straub. Or Fritz Leiber, who often still instills that sense of awe in me. I suppose I look for that more than anything else in a writer. On the other hand, I quite like

gory horror movies, but on an entirely different level of course. There it's more for the particular magic of the cinema—"My God, how did they get that spike through his head! Was it a cheap extra or something?" [Laughs] **WIATER:** We've heard you freelance as a "cineteratologist" for BBC radio, as well as doing reviews for British publications on the horror film.

CAMPBELL: Oh, yes! It's always good for a lot of free movies.

WIATER: Several years ago you were working on some screenplays for an English producer, though ultimately none were produced. Realizing your intense interest in the cinema, are you presently involved in any screen-writing projects?

CAMPBELL: No. *Obsession* has been optioned, but I won't be involved in the scripting of that. On the whole, I'd rather let someone else do it because I'm not at all convinced I would be competent to do a script from my own work. I'd rather let somebody else do it first; I'm probably just too close to it. We'll just have to see what happens.

WIATER: Finally, we'd like to have your reaction to the blurb from

Publisher's Weekly which terms you "a horror writer's horror writer."

CAMPBELL: Fine! Fine! But not only a horror writer's horror writer, but hopefully a reader's horror writer as well.... But, really, I don't know what that means! I didn't write it! [Laughs.] But to be serious, when I was writing *Demons* by Daylight, I really did have an enormous sort of vulnerable sense that I was doing something that nobody else has done before. Whether this is true I'm not at all certain, but I certainly thought I was going out on a limb, that "God, nobody's going to like this!" Because I was picking up fiction by others and saying to myself, "This isn't how you do it—but maybe I'm getting it wrong because these guys are doing it a different way." When I completed the book and packaged it up for August Derleth, I actually thought that he wasn't going to like it, that he was going to send the manuscript straight back, that it was terrible, that he wasn't going to want to touch it! So to have people say, "We think that you got it right," is just what I needed, basically. What can I say? It appears I must be doing something right. ■

CHARLES L. GRANT

(continued from page 33)

nances, or dealing with a handicap. These are real, everyday problems; and the twist is that my people find another way of dealing with these problems, or the world finds another way of dealing with my people. And that's what I like to call "dark fantasy." Not horror. Fiction that concerns the dark side of our lives.

The supernatural world holds all the symbols or metaphors to express what I want to say about life. The primary element is fear—of anything. Not just fear of dying. That's the easy answer, and probably the wrong answer. The second element is the essential aloneness of the individual. It doesn't matter whether you have friends, wives, lovers; at the bottom line, the individual is alone.

For me, it is a pessimistic fiction, in the sense that I don't believe there can be, for an given individual, any true, complete relationship with anyone or anything. For example, there can't be sharing; complete sharing. Everybody has secrets.

So when I write, it's a novel first,

and a horror novel second. I have a feeling that the best that I've ever done may stick around longer than the commercial stuff, because I try to write a novel first, then let the horror flow naturally.

WINTER: How do you feel about seeing your "Oxrun Station" novels back in print? Along with *Salem's Lot*, these were the first contemporary horror novels to focus on the small town as a locus of evil. Now small town horrors are an archetype—and rapidly, perhaps, becoming a stereotype. Were you ahead of your time?

GRANT: I look back on those books with nostalgia. They were my training ground.

But you know, *The Pet* is very much an Oxrun Station novel—small town setting, the emphasis on characters. My emphasis has always been on characters, no matter how small they were; I've always tried to make my characters identifiable, real people. There are no spear carriers in my books; I've never popped in a character just to get him killed.

I'm not sure that the books were ahead of their time. They were different because, when you took them all together, they looked at a single town from different perspectives. And the story of Oxrun Station isn't finished. I'd love to write a big, fat Ox-

run Station novel; and one of these days, I just might do it.

WINTER: What is the appeal of the small town setting to you?

GRANT: In the small town, there is a greater sense of community and of permanence; these things have been lost in the big cities. So when one individual in the small town is threatened, by extension, everyone is threatened.

If someone is threatened—murdered, even—in New York City, no one cares that much. But in a small town, if something truly dreadful happens, the whole town feels it. The terror is just next door. So threats are more intense; everything is more intense.

WINTER: How did the idea for *The Pet* come about?

GRANT: The idea was with me for a long time. I had written this note in my log about two ghost animals—a panther and a Siberian snow tiger—but I had no plot, just this great idea about these two animals stalking around New Jersey.

Then I saw two movies. First, *The Black Stallion*. That great scene where Mickey Rooney is alone with the stallion during a storm. Rooney looks at him and says words to the effect of "I don't know who you are, but you'd better win tomorrow." And then the camera angle changes, and

the horse turns his head, and all you can see is a three-quarter profile and his eye and his muzzle. And it's really spooky, because at that moment you think, "Is this horse real, or is he some kind of supernatural being?" And I thought, there's my animal: a black horse.

But I still didn't have a plot. And then I saw *Gregory's Girl*, which is the best movie ever made about adolescence—about what the average guy goes through, not the nerd, but just the average high-school kid. And I said, "That's it," and I went upstairs and started writing the book. I realized that I didn't have to write the kind of novel where the nerds are the good guys and the jocks are bad, but that I could just write about an average teenage kid.

It's actually a lot more autobiographical than I would care to admit. My Dad knew right away, though; he knew who that kid was ... but he didn't seem to recognize himself.

WINTER: How do you feel about the reviews—and I know that you, like most horror writers, have gotten them—that say, "This is Stephen King country?"

GRANT: That's bullshit. It's not Stephen King country; it's my country.

It's unfair to Steve, because it puts a burden on him. Every time one of his books comes out, everybody says, "Oh, what a great idea." As if Steve were the first one to write about a small town or a girl with telekinetic powers. But he wasn't; he just did it differently, and better, than a lot of others had. So now, everytime that someone writes about a small town or teenagers or whatever, it automatically becomes "Stephen King country." That's unfair to him and it sure as hell is unfair to the rest of us.

Reviewers can't seem to see past the most popular writer in any field. Espionage writers invariably are compared with LeCarre or Ken Follett or Robert Ludlum. It's something you can't escape. All I can do is try to keep that away from my book covers. One of my publishers wanted to call me "the new Stephen King." But I have to stand or fall on my own work, without being compared with anyone else.

WINTER: Have you been surprised by the endurance of the *Shadows* series? GRANT: I didn't expect the anthology to last more than one book. I never take those books for granted, because in today's atmosphere, with all the apparent appetite for explicit sex and

violence, I'm surprised that there's an audience to sustain collections of stories that are quiet and subtle.

I'm also surprised that there are writers out there who continue to write or try to write a *Shadows* kind of story. But muted horror will last a lot longer than anything by John Saul or Shaun Hutson or their likes. Just look at the classics. It's not the explicit stuff that has stood the test of time, but good writing that just happens to concern horror.

WINTER: Have you seen any fundamental changes in horror fiction in your ten years of editing *Shadows*?

GRANT: Certainly it's becoming more

GRANT: "All my stories and novels have one thing in common: they're 'people' stories, in the sense that my characters have real-world problems."

and more explicit. The new writers are much more influenced by contemporary films and television—and less by books and older movies. It's a trend that I don't much like. They seem to be writing screen treatments rather than stories. It's *Friday the 13th* stuff over and over again—not simply in explicitness, but in thinking that merely telling about events will suffice for a story.

Part of the pleasure of the success of *The Pet* was that people didn't realize they were reading a black-and-white novel. There were only two colors in that book—green and red—and they were used sparingly and deliberately.

The best horror movies are in black-and-white: the Val Lewton films, *The Haunting* by Robert Wise, *Psycho*. Because in black-and-white, the emphasis can't possibly involve gore, because it wouldn't stand out. The emphasis must be on atmosphere, lighting, camera angles, and characters.

In a technicolor film, the emphasis moves toward the effects, the blood, the gore. But in black-and-

white, you fill in the colors yourself. In *Psycho*, even though you know that's chocolate syrup pouring down the drain, in your mind's eye, you see it in red.

A good number of writers today are cheating their readers by not leaving anything to the imagination. They think that the glitter and the flash and the explicitness of violence or sex is more powerful than the imagination. And that's wrong. Nothing is more powerful than the imagination.

You may remember getting hit over the head; but you'll remember a paper cut much, much longer.

WINTER: Does the movement toward explicitness suggest that horror fiction is changing?

GRANT: No. Fiction, like music, goes through changes. But when the fads finally die, the good story, just like good music, always sticks around. The best example is David Bowie. Now David Bowie is one hell of a musician, and he's started more fads than he can probably count. But the best of his music will stick around, not because it's glitter or punk or whatever, but because it's good music. The same thing is true with novels and stories.

You know, there's been a lot of hoopla, particularly in critical circles, about the idea that the novel is dead. That's such a crock. The novel won't die; just like good music will always stick around. Because good musicians will keep playing; and good writers will keep writing.

As for subject matter, we've seen technological horror come and go. The current trend seems to emphasize psychological more than supernatural horror.

The props keep changing, but the subject matter remains basically the same: Is there something on the other side? And if so, what is it? And is it going to be good or bad?

And, for the most part, it's going to be ... bad.

WINTER: Do you see any encouraging trends in the field?

GRANT: It is encouraging that publishers, through boom or bust, are still willing to publish horror novels.

A lot of women are beginning to write horror these days. It's about time. I don't know why they didn't write more in the seventies, but they're really doing it with a vengeance now. And if you look at the stories in *Shadows* written by women, you'll find that they're much nastier—not in a feminist way, just nastier. It bodes well. ■



HOLLYWOOD GRAPEVINE

Information and speculation on fantastic film and television.

Steven Spielberg is furthering his explorations into the inkwell. His film with Don Bluth, *An American Tail*, is just out and he's already at work as producer of another animated feature. This time, however, he's working in association with Don Bluth's old employer, Walt Disney Pictures. Based on the novel *Who Censored Roger Rabbit*, an eccentric tale of a world where cartoon characters and human beings interact, the film will be done with a combination of live action and animation, similar to the Disney Studio's *Song of the South* and *Mary Poppins*. Robert (Back to the Future) Zemeckis is directing the live action sequences with Richard Williams in charge of the animation. The film's already gone through two title changes, with the current winner being *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Joe Dante, the director of *The Howling* and *Gremlins*, is at work on another Spielberg production, *Innerspace*. Inside word says that the title refers to a similar sort of location as that of *Fantastic Voyage*, only this time played for laughs.

Robert Zemeckis is also keeping busy. He's now at work on *The Shadow*, a new feature from Universal. As a publicity stunt, the identity of the actor portraying The Shadow is being kept secret. He has a separate make-up trailer from the other performers and wears a mask when traveling to and from the set. Assuming this same actor also portrays Lamont Cranston, don't the producers think the crew and the rest of the cast will notice who he



INTO THE INKWELL: Spielberg reanimated.

is and that the word will get out? Or is it just that the actor is so totally unknown this is the only way they can come up with to generate publicity for him?

And speaking of Zemeckis, *Back To The Future Again* will begin shooting this Spring. Michael J. Fox and Christopher Lloyd will once again star.

The Cabana Boys, two former Beverly Hills Hotel swimming pool attendants who managed to find backers to provide the funding for them to form their own production company, have purchased film rights to William Gibson's Hugo and Nebula winning novel, *Neuromancer*. Originally, their dream was to make a sequel to the 1984 financial-failure-but-cult-favorite *Buckaroo Banzai*. However, this didn't match the ideas of the executives at 20th Century Fox, who only want to

make movies which have a chance of making back their costs. So, instead, they decided to make *Neuromancer*. After what the Cabana Boys claim to have been exhaustive discussions with a large number of top Hollywood screenwriters, they've hired—surprise, surprise—Earl Mac Rauch to script *Neuromancer*. Mac Rauch, of course, wrote the script for *Buckaroo Banzai*.

Little Shop of Horrors, the musical comedy feature film based on the hit off-Broadway legit musical based on the Roger Corman low budget horror comedy film was released with a revised ending. In the original version, directed by Frank Oz, the film ended with most of the cast being eaten by Audrey II, the carnivorous plant from outer space. The new ending leaves some of the cast still alive for possible sequels. Once again, commercialism holds sway over art.

Mel Brooks is returning to directing with another parody film. Now that he's successfully spoofed Westerns (*Blazing Saddles*) and horror films (*Young Frankenstein*), he's turning his sights toward science fiction with *Spaceballs*. Brooks is also writing the screenplay along with Thomas Meehan and Ronny Graham.

Many films are planned but few are made. For that reason, rather than purchasing the film rights to a book, producers take an "option" on the work, reserving exclusive right to purchase the book for a specified period of time. Options only indicate interest in a property, and it seems another book is optioned every six seconds. But when the big bucks are spent to buy the film rights, that's serious. Recently, an independent producer who has held an option on Larry Niven's Hugo and Nebula-winning novel *Ringworld* has exercised his option and purchased the film rights.

Charles Band, who started out making extremely low budget science fiction and horror films and went on to found Empire Pictures, is the current king of the exploitation film. Empire recently purchased Dinocetta, the film studio outside of Rome originally built by Dino DeLaurentis. Now Band has purchased a castle as a home in Europe. He's also let it be known to his associates that ideas for films set in a European castle would be welcome. The castle's going to have to earn its keep.

Despite only moderate box-office success and little critical acceptance for Stephen King's *Creepshow*, *Creepshow II* is underway. The screenplay is by George Romero although he's not directing.

Just when you thought it was safe to go back to the theater, Universal Studios has announced *Jaws '87*, still another attempt to cash in on Stephen Spielberg's original success. This time the film will be set around San Francisco. The script is by Michael DeGuzman with Joseph Sargent both producing and directing. Sargent's credits include the feature *The Forbin Project* and made-for-TV movies *Goldengirl* and *The Immortal*. Spielberg will not be involved with the production. With luck, it will be better than *Jaws II* and *Jaws 3-D*. (Incidentally, prior to the making of *Jaws 3-D*, there was a plan to shoot a comedy version called *Jaws 3, People 0*. The script was poor and

the project was dropped.)

Other sequels in the works: *Superman IV* (with Christopher Reeve), a new *Indiana Jones* flick (with Harrison



THE MAX: Lorimer makes Headroom.

Ford), *Star Trek IV* (directed by Bill Shatner), *Ghostbusters II* (with Dan Aykroyd and Sigourney Weaver), and *Salem's Lot: The Sequel*. When will it all end?

Alfred Hitchcock fans may be in for a treat in the not too distant future. MCA Home Video has found footage of the original ending Hitchcock shot for *Topaz*. Instead of the freeze frame ending the picture now has, this newly discovered cat-and-mouse duel between the hero and the villain of the piece will be added to the video/laser disc soon to be released. Also just located are six reels of unedited camera negative for an uncompleted Hitchcock film, *Kaleidoscope*.

The new *Twilight Zone* hangs on, at this writing—but just barely. CBS has slotted it as a half hour opposite ratings champ *The Cosby Show*. There's no plan to renew it, but CBS may produce additional half-hour segments, to make a more attractive syndication package, perhaps as occasional TV movies.

Meanwhile, several writers from *Twilight Zone* are currently working with Lorimer on a new hour-long satiric science fiction program based on Max Headroom, the semi-synthesized talk show host who's pitched Coca-Cola and appeared on cable and in his own British video special, *Twenty Minutes into the Future*. ABC is planning to air the series early this spring, after the

conclusion of *Amerika*, the controversial miniseries about a Soviet takeover of the United States.

ABC is producing *Children of Stepford*, a TV-movie sequel to *The Stepford Wives* feature and it's original made-for-TV sequel, *Revenge of the Stepford Wives*. The teleplay is being written by Bill Bleich, who has written several other fantasy genre TV-movies including *Deadly Messages* and *The Midnight Hour*. The telefeature is set for airing during the February sweeps period.

Universal Television is planning on bringing back *The Munsters*, no doubt with an at least partially new cast. There's also some talk of Universal's returning to the era of bionics, with both *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman* coming back in a single program, replete with a bionic baby. This latter program seems unlikely, especially considering Universal's working with TMS Entertainment to produce a new animated series for syndication, *The Bionic Six*.

The fledgling Fox Broadcasting Company knows it needs more than Joan Rivers if it's going to become a fourth network. Last year it bid for (but failed to get) the rights to broadcast NFL Football! It also approached Paramount with the idea of bringing *Star Trek* back as a television series. Two of the three major networks also approached Paramount with the same idea but all of them were turned down. The inside word at the time was the studio felt a new TV series would damage the potential revenues for future *Star Trek* features. Now Paramount's television division has announced it's moving into original programming for syndication. One of their first projects will be *Star Trek—The Next Generation*. These new voyages will be with an all new crew set one hundred years further into the future than the original voyages. Gene Roddenberry is to be the show's Executive Producer.

Also on the schedule for original syndication from Paramount is a *Friday the 13th* TV series. This horror series won't be related to the films other than by title. No characters are to be held over. And probably no hockey masks, either. The setting will be an antique store, run by the niece and nephews of the recently deceased store owner.

PHOTO © 1986 HBO INC.

SCREEN

by Gahan Wilson

Our stalwart moviegoer surveys a trio of valiant attempts—and finds himself a majority of one.

H.P. Lovecraft's From Beyond (Empire)

Deadly Friend (Warner)

Ratboy (Warner)

Peggy Sue Got Married (Tri-Star)

Some time ago we waxed enthusiastic, albeit somewhat ruefully, over producer Brian Yuzna and director Stuart Gordon's film *Howard Phillips Lovecraft's Herbert West, Re-Animator* (though I don't recall we were too crazy about that hyphen). We pointed out that though its approach was schlock (a cinematic technical term denoting an artistic effort which can be fairly described as shabby) and its images frankly hackneyed, it had a kind of necromantic madcap joy, and an underlying basis of real originality, and that because it shared the above characteristics with Lovecraft's original work, and because it remained true to the essential feel of the tacky serial which HPL ground out for an amateur journal (called *Home Brew*, if you can believe it) and confessed on all possible occasions afterward that he loathed, that it was, to date, the best film version so far of any of the Lovecraftian adaptations to the screen. We went so far as to say we were eagerly awaiting what Mr. Gordon and his cohorts would do next to the Lovecraft cannon.

Lovecraft's Bane

Well, we (and this time I mean you and I) need to wait no longer for *H.P. Lovecraft's From Beyond* is out and playing at the nabes and it is, as we (you and I) dreaded deep in our hearts, a Big Let Down.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE THIRD EYE: Jeffrey Combs in *From Beyond*

True enough, it does start with a perfectly acceptable variant of Lovecraft's very minor *From Beyond*: a decidedly mad scientist hits on the disturbing notion that there may be things swimming around you even now as you sit there—supposedly safe and sound, reading this innocent looking movie review—very horrible and deadly things. You can't see them, but that is just as well, friend, because that means *they can't see you, either, and that is the only reason they don't gobble you up or WORSE* ... Such were the sort of thoughts that drifted through the head of the shy, young Mr. Lovecraft as he wandered along Providence's Benefit Street, or paused to admire the view from its Prospect Terrace.

Anyhow, the mad scientists of both Lovecraft's story and Gordon's movie make the fatal blunder of constructing a device which stimulates the pineal gland (the third eye—get it?), so that those stimulated can see the dreadful things, but the Big Drawback is that it also allows the things to see the seers, with predictably unfortunate results.

I find Lovecraft's gadget, which operates via hyped ultraviolet light, considerably more convincing than Gordon's (which operates via tuning forks), particularly concerning the technical aspects of its sinister side-effect of allowing the monsters and us to have a clearer view of one another, but I'm not sure if that's merely a

quibble or something more serious.

In any case, the only part of the movie which actually derives from HPL's tale is the spooky underlying notion described above, and, with acceptable bendings, the first experiment on the part of the mad scientist (played again, but not as well, by Jeffrey Combs). After that it is all sky blue fooling around, and that, of course, sets off in a different direction than the *Herbert West* venture which, for all its wild sprees and sexual shenanigans, had essentially the same construct and led up to essentially the same resolution as the original story.

From Beyond is rather as if you started a movie called *Howard Phillips Lovecraft's The Outsider* with the entire plot of *HPL's The Outsider* (ghoulish entity climbs out of ancestral home into a party being held in our world and discovers to his horror that he is a ghoulish entity) and then went on to have the ghoulish entity discover he's not so bad after a good clean up, a few snappy suits, a little plastic surgery—and success in a Broadway musical leads to a long and happy career on the Coast, which leads to the Presidency of the United States, which leads to Ronald Reagan saying at his funeral that "The Outsider turned out to be an Insider, after all."

Actually I don't think the makeup part in *From Beyond* is as interesting as the one in my proposed *The Outsider* (sounds like it'd be one heck

of a flick! Anybody interested? How about it, Yuzna?), but it is as deviant, no pun intended, since it launches into steamy depths of leather corset and handcuff style S&M fun and games, which wouldn't be all that bad if I hadn't been told the really-true version wasn't shown here in the U.S.A. (how do you like living in a great big Boston?), but only in Europe, so maybe a Lovecraftian point was made in the explicit scenes which our leaders in their wisdom felt was too much for us naive Yanks. Saved again.

Another odd flaw in *From Beyond* is that, encouraged by the financial success of *Herbert West*, the producers decided they would spend big bucks on special effects and hired several makeup and monster builder teams, and that got them a wide range of monsters and technical effects, let me tell you! There is an extraordinary variation from one horrible entity to the next, both in quality of production and in creativity, and no sense of unity soever. The worst job is the makeup worn by Combs when his pineal gland is fully extended (it bobs out in front of his forehead like a carnival novelty) and he turns into a bulgy-domed, extremely tacky monster who is, for reasons unexplained (or perhaps I nodded off during the explanation; I'm not perfect), crazy about eating brains. I haven't seen anything outside of home movies that looked as downright dumb since the pie-in-the-face makeup job in *I Was a*



Anne Ramsey of *Deadly Friend*

Teen-Age Monster. What do you suppose they'll adapt next? *Howard Phillips Lovecraft's Selected Letters Volume III*

Craven Killer

Wes Craven is one of the more interesting creators working our special vein of movies, and I am always interested in what he's been up to. He seems to be a totally unabashed soul unafraid to veer off in any direction whatsoever from comic book heroes to it-was-only-a-dream movies in which the dreams turn out to be fatal, and if he now and then blows it, at least you'll know he tried.

Deadly Friend is, I'm afraid, firmly in this last category. The basic notion, a typically flip-flop Cravenesque whimsey, is to take the healthy, sexy girl next door (played by the very healthy, sexy Kristy Swanson) and turn her into a ravaging monster who gorily slaughters the various grown-ups on her teenage enemies list.

Mr. Craven has this done to her by her well-intentioned boy friend, a kid whiz with robots, who brings her back from the dead (rather more implausibly than necessary, it seemed to me) by having him insert a bit of gadgetry (for the purposes of this movie we might call it Gidgitry) from the, er, brain of his loveable robot (does it seem to you that there have lately been a few too many lovable robots rolling around on their cute little treads, or am I just being cranky again?) which we saw destroyed by a hag neighbor and this, for some reason or other, not only gets her whole sexy little body functioning again (admittedly in a clammy, dark-under-the-eyeish way), but, for some reason or other, turns her into a homicidal maniac possessed of super human strength.



ARE WE NOT MEN? S.L. Baird as a moused-up misfit in *Ratboy*.

Like I say, I'm fond of Craven's work in general, and always interested in seeing what he comes up with, but though there are bright little moments (the first murder by basketball, for instance), his pretty little bulldozer does not convince, and things were not made easier for Ms. Swanson when Craven told her to walk about holding her fingers stiffly before her (so as to put you in mind of the clamps the original robot used for hands) and then forgetting to tell her not to curl her digits human style whenever she gets absorbed in the business of slaughter. But I'll still be in the line to see Mr. Craven's next effort.

Sinking Rats

Sandra Locke directs and stars in *Ratboy* and obviously consistently overrode the script, and she was not very good at any of it, I'm sorry to say. The Ratboy himself was designed by Rick Baker, who did his usual workmanlike job (sure beats the duck in *Howard The*) and cleverly transformed a small female actress, S.L. Baird, into a strange, decidedly ratlike little creature with big ears and nose and so on. Ms. Baird scuttles around rattishly, but the movie is total chaos and switches mood and philosophy and plot line and every other damn thing so casually and with such chaotic abandon that I suspect Locke was not even aware she was doing it. I'm sure someone could make a rather cute little movie—who knows? maybe even a profound one—about a wee little animal man and what happens when he runs into a highly exploitive society (I think he was supposed to combine the charms of a tiny King Kong and a less intelligent Elephant Man), but *Ratboy* isn't it.

Where are you, Peggy Sue?

Peggy Sue Got Married is one of those movies that depressed the hell out of me because it firmly lets me know I'm a creep, a stranger in my own society, and convinced me it's a miracle my fellow citizens haven't found me out and stoned me to death in the street or thrown me into some dark oubliette.

Everybody in the real world seems to love *Peggy Sue*. The two-page ads for it in *The New York Times* have quotes from dozens of establishment types describing it as the best movie of the year, and the rest crowd one another to rave on about how hilarious it is and how insightful, and I gather it's a great big hit, and it seems to give everybody who sees it a warm glow in their hearts (the nice warm



GIDGETRY: Kristy Swanson as a retooled teenager in *Deadly Friend*

glow, mind you, not the alarming kind that makes you think you're about to die), and there just doesn't seem to be any end to the enthusiastic affection this movie has inspired.

I, on the other hand, found it to be a condescending, mean little lecture which manages to simultaneously make contemptuous fun of middle class life and to deride all attempts (and it does deride a wide-ranging number of attempts, I'll hand it that) to escape that middle class life. It's almost Hitlerian (all right, so I'm getting carried away) in its disgust with "little people," but it sneers at any attempts on their part to grow, or at least cheapens them. On top of that it pretends that Kathleen Turner could go back to high school and pass herself off as a teenager (come on!), and it has the most repulsive cast of youths pretending to be aged (that's another thing I'm getting enough of along with cute little robots) I've seen to date, and Nicolas Cage is the most repulsive of the lot, though, mind you, he had to be *really* repulsive to pull that off.

Anyway, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my society for not stoning me to death or throwing me into that oubliette. I realize that it's obviously taken a lot of forbearance, and I just want to say that I appreciate it.



CLASSIC SF/HORROR FILMS on Video Cassette

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea	\$29.95
Forbidden Planet	59.95
War of the Worlds	24.95
Rodan	59.95
Dracula (1931)	39.95
Frankenstein (1931)	39.95
The Fly (1958)	59.95
Martian Chronicles	(ea) 59.95
Andromeda Strain	59.95
Them	59.95
Planet of the Apes Series	(ea) 59.95

Catalog of 500+ titles — \$2.00
(Refundable with first order)

SEND CHECK OR MONEY ORDER TO: TZ

A&R VIDEO SALES
P.O. Box 2066
Littleton, CO 80161

Specify:
VHS ☐
Beta ☐

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

FOR ORDERS OVER \$10,
YOU MAY USE MASTER CARD OR VISA

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____

THE OTHER SIDE

WEIRDER THAN FICTION



DOWN-HOME STRANGENESS: Byrne's *True Stories*.

"Real life is weirder than fiction," says David Byrne, singer songwriter of the Talking Heads. For Byrne, the path to his new Warner Brothers film *True Stories* started two or three years ago when he began clipping stories out of tabloids like the *Weekly World News*.

"I was attracted to the human interest stories in those papers," says Byrne, "rather than to stories about UFOs or Bigfoot babies or Liz Taylor. I think those newspapers come closer to representing people's real fears and wishes and aspirations than newspapers devoted to world events."

The end product is an offbeat, episodic movie punctuated with music, set in the mythical town of Virgil, Texas—a "typical" American outpost inhabited by a multitude of eccentric characters with simple descriptive names like the Lazy Woman (portrayed by Swoosie Kurtz), the Preacher (John Ingle) and the Computer Guy (Matthew Posey).

Why Texas rather than an urban area like New York or Los Angeles? "Gosh," says Byrne (who's partial to such expressions), "I guess that as a practical consideration, once I had all the characters and situations worked out, I decided as a unifying factor to put them all in the same town. In a big town like New York, you'd never see these people all in the same place. Besides," he adds, "New York and LA don't really represent this country."

Byrne, who directed several of the Talking Heads' music videos, has displayed a penchant for collaboration that seems to mark contemporary artists. He provided music and text for "The Knee Plays," short vignettes between the scenes for avant-garde playwright Robert Wilson's epic opera *The Civil Wars*, and for choreographer Twyla Tharp's dance piece *The Catherine Wheel*. For *Stop Making Sense*, The Talking



PAPA LEGBA: Pop Staples as a voodoo priest.

Heads' documentary, Byrne collaborated with film director Jonathan Demme. *True Stories* was co-written with Stephen Tobolsky and Pulitzer Prize-winner Beth Henley, author of *Crimes of the Heart*.

"It's fun to have people from other fields react to your ideas," says Byrne. "Sometimes you end up having to compromise, but that's the nature of the thing."

Byrne's intention with *True Stories* was to make a film in which music played an integral role. "Music is often used as an easy way to generate excitement. But for me that limits a film's believability. Half the time the music in a movie just seems to be there for the marketing." So although the Talking Heads composed all of the film's music, it's performed by a variety of artists, including Tex-Mex accordionist Steve Jordan, Cal Finch of the new wave polka band Brave Combo, and Western Swing veterans Tommy Canfield and Tommy Morell.

True Stories does veer into the fantastic at one point, however. Eighty-year-old Pop Staples, leader of the world-famous gospel group The Staples Singers, makes his acting debut in the film as Mr. Tucker, a black servant who is also a voodoo priest. Singing these lyrics during a mystical healing ceremony in his home, Tucker exemplifies the essential strangeness that lies within even the most "ordinary" people:

*"Papa Legba, com̃ and open the gate,
Papa Legba, to the city of camps,
Now, we're your children, come and ride your horse
In the night, in the night,
Come and ride your horse...."*

THE OTHER SIDE

hour—and still walk.

For sitters, the seventy-five hundred-member Couch Potatoes Club of Dixon, California, offers assurance that vegetating in front of the TV set is a good idea. Couch Potatoes prefer to think of this activity as "the esoteric art of prolonged television viewing."

And the Society for the Restoration and Preservation of Red M&Ms of Knoxville, Tennessee, is petitioning the M&Ms company to restore red candies to the classic mix. (There's been no red since 1976). Or Densa—a seven hundred fifty-member organization at Rochester, New York—is for low-brow rejects from Mensa, the genius IQ society.

Each of these entries include the address to write for membership—which is not for everybody. Vampires, particularly, should beware: The Lovers of the Stinking Rose, a twenty-five hundred-member group at Berkeley, California isn't for people who love roses. It's for people who love garlic.

—Ron Wolfe

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

For every horror movie-goer with a screaming crush on dark-eyed Caroline Munro... for couch potatoes, aardvark fanciers, and, yes, tidily-wink champions, the message is this:

Let's get together.

How? With a trip to the reference department of the nearest good-sized public library, there to find the 1987 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Associations*.

The encyclopedia is a three-volume, 2,450-page listing of special interest groups, including some weird enough to belong in that well-known land of both shadow and substance.

Presented, for instance, for your consideration... The American Zombie Association of Menlow, Iowa, is for aficionados of the "zombie," a staggering drink made of rum and brandy. Membership requirements include being able to plug three of the potent drinks in one

April of 1986, the series was created by one of the owners of Phone Programs, Fred Weiner, and is now produced by Lisa Wernick. According to Charlie DeNatale, head of promotions, the line was briefly removed from the New York market following complaints that children were disturbed by a story about a killer Santa. They have since modified their advertising so that it will be harder for small children to get hold of the number.

It wouldn't be fair to keep you away from this service, so if you ever want a quick jolt of horror, just call (312) 976-3838 for a forty-seven-second excursion into terror (a local call within Chicago, long distance rates apply elsewhere). They also accept freelance scripts. Budding writers can reach them at Phone Programs, Inc., P.O. Box 7012, F.D.R. Station, New York, NY 10150 and they'll send you a set of their guidelines.

—Robert Simpson



© 1984 NEW LINE CINEMA CORP.

DIAL "T" FOR TERROR

The people at Phone Programs, Inc.—the same folks who bring you Dial-a-Joke and Sports Phone—have created a horrifying new service—Tales of Terror.

Populated by hordes of walking dead and blood-sucking nasties, the stories are really forty-seven-second radio dramas updated twice a day, complete with sound effects, music, and chilling endings. John Gaffney, one of the writers, says: "They capture the spirit of '50s EC horror comics at their best." One tale, narrated by Jan Layton, featured a man who beheaded his wife and served her up in a crystal bowl. Another tale concerned a boy who decided to help his brother dispose of a dead body, only to be dragged down with him into the grave by the skeletal hand of the reanimated victim.

Running since



THE OTHER DE

TOR LIKE
OATMEALS



AMERICAN PIE IN THE FACE

I remember the first time I stumbled into the bizarre world of Josh and Drew Friedman, artist and writer sons of humorist Bruce Jay Friedman. It was in an early issue of Art Spiegelman's magazine *RAW*: there, executed in a spectacularly obsessive pointillistic style, was a viciously satiric two page story in comic strip format, headed "The Andy Griffith Show," and there indeed was Andy, every possibility of redneck vacuity and mean-spiritedness etched into the lineaments of his face.

The Friedmans had plunged their hands into the rotting carcass of 1960s TV and come up with something funny and surreal and nasty as hell—the subtext lurking beneath the surface of sunny sitcomland, the dark side of flag and apple pie.

That was the first encounter. Since then there have been a number, in the pages of *RAW* and *Heavy Metal* and *National Lampoon*. Most of them have been reprinted in the Friedmans' first book, *Any*

Similarity to Persons Living or Dead is Purely Coincidental (\$10.95 from Fantagraphics).

Here are Abbott and Costello, the sleaziness implicit in Abbott's pencil-thin line moutache and cruel mouth finding its objective correlative in a setting of slum streets populated by dead end drifters and con artists.

And talk-show host Joe Franklin, not listening to his guests, asking inane questions, and shrinking to minute proportions in a series of stories that have inspired him to institute an array of lawsuits against the Friedmans.

And Jimmy Durante, in bed with a bevy of women, but still with his hat on. And Tor Johnson, his eyes rolled up in his head, riding the subway. And Bob Hope at one hundred, unchanged.

The Friedmans know how to take a deep dive into the collective unconscious and bring back the goods. They've picked it up and put it down with surgical precision, dead pan wit, and, at times, unforgiving cruelty.

—Jon White

KING KONG LIVED

Look into the mirror. Picture yourself three or four feet taller, and a good, say, four hundred fifty pounds heavier. Nice image? Pleasant reflection? Don't laugh—truth is, it might have been. It just might have been. . . .

Half a million years ago humans wasn't the only primates on this planet. We shared the world with *Gigantopithecus*, the largest primate of all. Standing nine feet tall and weighing in at about six hundred pounds, *Gigantopithecus* was a veritable true-life King Kong (maybe Hollywood wasn't that far off after all). The existence of this furry monster has long been suspected by anthropologists. What wasn't known—until recently—was the cause of its extinction. Scientists in Vietnam have just found preliminary evidence—fossils and primitive weapons—that indicates these beasts were killed off by—brace yourself

now—us. Early man—our great-grandparent *Homo erectus*, to be exact—is currently held responsible for the demise of these giant apes.

Scientists don't yet know how this came to be. Were we more cunning? Did we out-fox them with our superior intellect? Or instead, was it simply a twist of fate—happstance—that led to the defeat of these enormous beings? Could the outcome of these prehistoric battles have hinged upon some strange quirk of the luck of the draw—who held the high ground, maybe, or who outnumbered whom, or who found the most heavy stones? Or perhaps it was decided by a simple physical trait: who could see better in the dark or which side was the most agile. . . ?

What if they had held the high ground?

If, for the sake of argument, we had lost this prehistoric war; if our branch on the evolutionary tree had been pruned off and the *Gigantopithecus* limb allowed to grow; what then? What

(continued on page 102)



THE OTHER SIDE

IN GOD WE RUST

Fostoria, Ohio, an industrial town of seventeen thousand, might seem an odd locale for a summer-long flirtation with the uncanny—not least when the site of reportedly divine events is a rusted vegetable-oil storage tank on State Route 12.

July, 1986. Fostoria resident Rita Ratchen was driving home from work one night, past the Hi-Lo gas station, past the country club, past the Archer Daniels Midland soy processing plant . . . when she suddenly saw God appear on the side of an ADM storage tank—and then vanish as she drove nearer. Four nights later, Dorothy Droll saw the same vision. For weeks, the local daily, the *Fostoria Review Times*, declined to report the phenomenon, as first dozens, then hundreds of people gathered each night to view a glowing figure on the side of a fifteen-foot soybean-oil tank. Then it changed. Believers agreed that the lone figure had become a tableau of Jesus walking with His hand on the shoulder of a young boy.

On August 20, *Review Times* Managing Editor Carl Hunnell finally ran the headline, "Image of Christ Reported West of Town."

The images could



only be seen at night, only by the faithful. Daylight revealed—a rusted storage tank with a coat of primer. ADM investigators, skeptics, local TV news video crews and photographers found—a rusted storage tank with a coat of primer. "We took day pictures, night pictures, aerial pictures, every kind," said *Review*

Times City Editor Ralph Wise. "It was only a storage tank."

But the hundreds of visitors became thousands. Protestors stopped ADM's plans to finish salvaging the tank. By August 26, a third image was reported: the Lord's head in profile on the far side of the tank. Pious entrepreneurs sold thousands of souvenir

jugs and t-shirts bearing the legend, "I Saw the Image—The Pilgrimage, Fostoria, OH"; a Michigan shutterbug moved thousands of storage tank snapshots; the nearby LK Family Restaurant franchise, recently fifty-third in sales in the chain of fifty-five cages, leapt to third place. Then one hundred fifty miles away, in a display of Buckeye boosterism, Dunkinville, Ohio, Rev. Vic Potts declared that there was also a miracle image on the door of his Methodist Church; he claimed the Dunkinville miracle image was much clearer than the Fostoria miracle image. But Dunkinville wasn't drawing the crowds.

Then the allegedly sacred fell to the decidedly profane and mundane. In September, 1986, an area fisherman, sick and tired of the urban traffic snarls, threw a batch of paint-filled balloons at the tank, defacing the image. ADM officials, possibly relieved, announced there was no way to remove the paint without removing the miraculous rust. There was nothing for it but to finish painting the tank lest it crack in the harsh Ohio winter and flood Rte. 12 with healthful, but terribly secular, polyunsaturated soybean oil. The rust—or the image of Christ—was lost forever.

—Mark Arnold

SANDAK, INC.

KONG

(continued from page 101)
would our world be like now if intelligent life on earth had grown from that seed?

Certainly we would be larger—both taller and heavier. Our homes, our vehicles, our tools—everything we created would be proportionately bigger. Imagine it: a whole civilization of giants.

Cities would loom half again as high. Each structure—from chairs to elevators to the buildings themselves—would have been designed to support enormous weight. The streets would be full of hulking creatures loping along on their knuckles, bearing the cold weather with little or no clothing.

What kind of cultures would have developed? What religions? How

would technology have differed? And—perhaps the most obvious question—what would happen to the concept of beauty?

It's safe to say that, in this alternate world, if you glanced at your six-hundred-odd-pound form in the mirror, you would not be upset. Most likely you would be considered quite attractive. In fact, the idea of being a skinny

one-hundred ninety-seven pound weakling would be genuinely repulsive. It is interesting to note how much our ideas of grace and beauty seem to be based on something as fragile as an evolutionary accident.

So look in the mirror. And as you do, remember; Normal ain't nothing but evolutionary chance. You big ape, you.

—Peter R. Emshwiller